



BEATING

THE AIR.





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BEATING THE AIR.

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Many are the sayings of the wise
In antient and in modern books inrolled,
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude,
And to the bearing well of all calamities,
All chances incident to man's frail life
Consolatories writ. . . .

MILTON

BEATING THE AIR.

BY

ULICK RALPH BURKE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BEATING THE AIR.

CHAPTER I.

SIR WALTER PERCEVAL had not grown either happier or more amiable as he grew older. He had quarrelled with the maiden aunt who had once kept his house for him ; and he had fallen foul of a succession of salaried housekeepers. He had never interested himself much in any one of the human race for over fifty years, and now none of the human race seemed to take very much interest in him. And he felt rather aggrieved at it. He was no longer sought by match-making mothers, nor petted by pretty

daughters: he had made no return to them for their attentions and their smiles, but he regretted that they were bestowed no more. Indeed he not only regretted but resented it. He had never been what is usually called an amiable man, and now he was becoming decidedly cross in the grain.

Such was Sir Walter's state of mind when he received the news of his nephew's approaching marriage. He was first of all very much astonished. Then he was very angry. Humphrey was the only person for a long time past towards whom he had felt decidedly kindly disposed. He had taken a fancy to him in his boyhood, and he had showed him much kindness as a youth. He had given him a standing invitation to come and stay at Shipton whenever he could. He had given him a horse. He had included him in his best shooting parties. What is more he had really taken an interest in him

—an interest that he had taken in no one else.

And was he now to be treated in this way?

“The young cub,” said he, “to go and marry without asking either my leave or my advice!”

“A young fool! to go and fall in love with the first pretty face he sees—and to think it necessary to marry her,” soliloquized the baronet with a sneer. And all on the strength of his expectations from me—after my death! This aggravated the insult. Sir Walter now not only despised his nephew for his “folly,” and felt angry with him for his “undutiful conduct,” but he was actually jealous of him: doubly jealous. Jealous as a man is of his heir, especially when he conceives that heir to have traded upon his expectations; and further jealous of him as being happily married, of having found some one to love

and cherish him, while he himself sat there alone in the great cheerless breakfast-room at Shipton Court, with no better company than his grievances, and no brighter expectation than his death !

“D—— him,” muttered Sir Walter. “I’ve half a mind to turn the tables upon him. What a sell it would be for him and his governess if I were to marry and have a son. Suppose I was to do so ! I’m heartily sick of this solitary life. Why shouldn’t I ? Why shouldn’t I get a wife as well as he ? or anyone else ? By Jove, I’ll do it too,” said Sir Walter, rising and ringing the bell.

“The mail phaeton, at once,” said he to the servant who appeared ; and then he went to his room and dressed with peculiar care. He was over fifty, it is true, but he was a fine-looking man, and with his title and his fifteen thousand a year, he might be considered a highly eligible match by every

mother of unmarried daughters, and by many of the unmarried daughters themselves. That morning Sir Walter Perceval drove himself over to Bilton Grange, and that day month Sir Walter Perceval was the accepted lover of Miss Ellen Powis-Hargraves, the lovely and accomplished daughter of Sir Hargrave Powis-Hargraves of Bilton Grange. Miss Ellen was eighteen years of age. Her elder sister, who was nearly twenty, was still unmarried, her elder brother was in a cavalry regiment, and the younger had just completed his studies at Cambridge, and was about to take Holy orders. Nothing could be more respectable than the connection. The Hargraves baronetcy was indeed an older one than the Perceval; Sir Hargrave's ancestor, who was a city merchant, having purchased his hereditary honours from that learned and astute monarch James the First, for the sum of one thousand and

eleven pounds sterling; while it was only Sir Walter's great-great-grandfather, who had represented the neighbouring borough in Parliament, and who had been created a baronet by no less a person than Sir Robert Walpole, in return for some trifling services in the form of a well-timed vote on the question of Supply.

Ellen was a quiet ladylike English girl; rather pretty, somewhat unintellectual, with excellent principles, and with no fortune. She was flattered by Sir Walter's attentions and mindful of her own duty, and she consented to become his wife much as she would have consented to take a class at the Sunday school.

CHAPTER II.



To say that Charles Perceval was astonished at the news of his elder brother's approaching marriage is to say very little. The full purport of the strange letter, half apologetic, half defiant, in which Sir Walter conveyed to him the news of his engagement, only gradually broke upon his mind ; and having answered it as well as he could, he paused for some days to think over his altered position before writing to Humphrey.

From day to day he put off this letter ; he did not wish to grieve his son on his wedding tour ; and again, it would be so much easier to tell the news face to face than to

write. Besides, he must look into his affairs before he could tell Humphrey his position and prospects, and this "looking into affairs" was by no means an easy nor a short, and in fine very far from a satisfactory proceeding. His salary would of course keep things going as long as he lived. But Commissionerships in the Board of Inland Harbours unfortunately not being hereditary offices like Earl Marshalships, he could not leave his place to his son.

He would insure his life. He accordingly presented himself at a well-known office, and after a medical examination his proposal was refused! His life was not insurable. Here was a terrible medical opinion gratis. He might die any day, and what was Humphrey to do? The Guards was scarcely a profession—especially for an ensign and lieutenant. But how about the fortune of a thousand a year which Charles Perceval had inherited from his mother? Indeed

there was but little of it left. Until Humphrey had gone to Eton, his father had lived strictly within his income, but as years passed on and living became more expensive, his ideas of what was necessary grew, as the ideas of generous and cultivated minds do grow, larger. Humphrey had cost three hundred a year at Eton until he came to cost six hundred a year in the Guards, and as Sir Walter got older and older, and the probability that he would never marry came to be considered by every one to be a certainty,—Charles Perceval had drawn so largely upon the capital which constituted his maternal inheritance, that when he was now so rudely awakened from his day-dream, and looked over his affairs with his man of business, he found little more than a hundred a year remaining, after paying off all debts, and what his lawyer called “generally squaring up everything.”

In addition to this there was the interest of his poor wife's fortune, some two hundred a year, so that although Charles Perceval's available income at the moment amounted to over thirteen hundred a year, upon which, with care, they could all live well enough, he would have to say to his son on his return, "My boy; at my death you will be a beggar. You have married a girl without a penny. All you will have between you will be three hundred a year. May God forgive me; and have pity upon you." This was an agreeable greeting to prepare for his only son on his return from his happy wedding tour, with his bright young wife upon his arm, and his own fair face full of joy and life and hope and love.

And Charles Perceval was one of those soft and kindly natures that could not bear to see a fly suffer, and to whom, to be obliged to say a harsh word, or to convey painful news, was a real source of suffering.

And his sensitiveness was not of that selfish kind, which cares not how much pain it inflicts so long as the pain be not seen. He knew that he could convey his sad news much better in conversation than by letter; so he still paused, and he made no allusion in his letters to Humphrey to the subject that was gnawing at his vitals.

Again he thought, he hoped—without allowing his hopes and his thoughts to take any definite form—that Sir Walter might do something for his nephew. The conventional tone, and mode of action, according to those who claim to be arbiters of what is becoming, would no doubt have been for Charles to have first of all resented Sir Walter's marriage as an affront as well as an injury, and having thus as it were put himself in the right, to have rejected any kind offer on his brother's part with scorn. But the conduct of those heroes of romance who are described as throwing bundles of

bank notes at those who have really or constructively injured them, always strikes one as unreal, and is certainly vastly foolish. And Charles Perceval was a plain man with some common sense, and with a very great desire for his son's welfare and happiness. It was perfectly obvious to him that Sir Walter had a perfect right to marry when and whom he liked, and if his relations had chosen to consider that he would never do so, and to act upon their own gratuitous impressions, they had certainly only themselves to blame. At the same time, if Sir Walter also chose to make his nephew a handsome allowance, he had a perfect right to do so, and his nephew would be equally justified in accepting it.

But Sir Walter did not give either his brother or his nephew an opportunity of rejecting his offers. He made none. Perhaps he thought they would be refused if made; and like a proud man, he did not

care even to run the chance of a refusal. Or perhaps, like plenty of people who have fifteen thousand a year, he thought it was quite little enough for him to live on; and that if any change were to be made, it would be much more according to the inherent fitness of things that another thousand a year should be added to his own fortune than that five hundred should be taken away to provide for anyone whatever. As a matter of fact, a man with twenty thousand a year is not only not happier than a man with fifteen thousand—that is a mere truism—but in nine cases out of ten he is actually no better off.

For all practical purposes he is no richer. He has more things that he does not want, and never sees. His tradesmen and servants rob him more. He has possibly more under-gardeners, or an extra break for his domestics. If he bets or plunges on the turf, he may possibly last

a year longer, and if he thinks he cares for blue china, he may have an extra vase or two in some part of his drawing-room where he never sees them.

The richest people in the world are those who have three thousand a year and no country house: who know the value of money, and are determined to have the best of everything. But the happiest are those, whatever their income—and such happiness is to be found more often among the small than the great fortunes—who administer it for the happiness of others.

Of all the gifts of God, money is surely the strangest. Why is one man rich on a thousand a year while another is poor on ten thousand? Without money—dross as it may be called—what happiness can there be in this life? And yet it is the fashion to revile, and to affect to despise it. Of all the talents that are given to man, is it not that which most nearly resembles the gift

in the Parable? What was the original talent but silver or gold? And yet do not men take rank upon the earnestness of their declarations that the origin and nature of money are rather Devilish than Divine.

But let us look at men's actions rather than listen to their professions of faith.

What body of men has ever most strenuously enjoined, and praised, and glorified *Poverty*? The Church of Rome. What body of men has ever more systematically accumulated, or more ably administered *Riches*? What community has so keen an appreciation of the value and power of money, keeping debtor and creditor accounts in hard cash both as regards this world and the world to come? Is it not that Church, which, in spite of Infidelity and Infallibility, of Protestantism and of Progress, is still the mistress of a hundred and forty millions of souls, the largest and the most powerful Christian Corporation in the world.

CHAPTER III.

“HUMPHREY, my dear boy, how well you are looking!—and you, dearest Sybil,” said Charles Perceval as cheerily as he could, as his son and daughter-in-law burst into the drawing-room about seven o’clock in the evening, on their return from Paris.

“Yes, we are tolerably well,” said Humphrey in a big voice, looking fondly and proudly at his wife, “and very happy. But you are looking a little worn, my dear father. Sybil must brighten you up a little. Have the cares of housekeeping—— But you are not ill?” said he, changing his tone somewhat suddenly, as he saw how pale his father looked.

“Oh, no!—but you must go up and get ready for dinner; we dine at half-past seven; and then I must hear all about your travels: and about your impressions of the world,” said he, turning to Sybil. “I hope you will find everything nice and ready for you.”

At dinner the hollowness of his gaiety was unobserved by Sybil, who was rather tired after her journey, and rather excited at finding herself for the first time in her life in her new home; but Humphrey soon saw that there was something amiss. However he learned nothing that night.

Charles Perceval had said to himself:

“Their first night’s rest in this house shall not be disturbed by distressing thoughts. Disagreeable business is always better commenced in the morning. It’s enough that I should lie awake to-night.” And lie awake he did, reproaching himself for all he had done for long years back,

and wondering what he would or would not do now, and drawing so miserable a picture of life, that he groaned aloud as he tossed from side to side of his restless couch.

At breakfast next morning Charles Perceval's care was even more potent than the combined happiness of his son and daughter, and the meal passed off somewhat drearily. It even required a little effort on Sybil's part as she rose from table, to say in her gayest tone of voice :

“ Now, father, I am going to look over the house books and the store-room, and to ask for the keys of office, for I must try and show you and Humphrey what a good housekeeper I am, you know.”

She was rather surprised that Mr. Perceval did not smile a more encouraging approval ; but Humphrey gave her a look which abundantly satisfied her ; and she went tripping lightly away to enter upon the duties of her new life.

"You are looking ill, father dear," said Humphrey, as soon as she had left the room.

"Yes, Humphrey; I have had a great deal of trouble lately. I did not think it necessary to write to you upon the subject. I did not want to spoil the pleasure of your wedding trip."

"Oh, how kind of you, dear father! You should have sent for us, and we would have both tried to help and console you, and at all events to make a pleasant home."

"I am sure Sybil will do that. But I am afraid neither you nor Sybil can be of any use. Your Uncle Walter is going to be married!"

"To be married? By Jove! Really? Who to?"

"Oh, to Miss Ellen Hargraves."

"Then I'm afraid poor little Sybil may not be Lady Perceval after all. I should have liked her to have been "My lady," if it

were only on account of the Osbornes," said Humphrey gaily.

Charles Perceval knew not how to proceed.

"Oh! well, perhaps I shall be made a K.C.B. for distinguished service in the Wellington Barracks," continued his son: "and that reminds me; I am now the Senior Lieutenant in our battalion; and I heard in Paris that Lord Jocelyn Graham thinks of selling; so there will be a step going, and I shall get my company. That will be a title, any how—Captain Perceval—whether Uncle Walter marries or not. I suppose we must see about the purchase-money and—— But what is the matter, father dear?" said Humphrey, abruptly breaking off on seeing the misery in his father's pale face.

"Matter, Humphrey? The matter is that there is no money to buy your step,—that you had better sell out, for you will

not have money enough to stay in the Guards!" And then, having broken the ice, Charles Perceval told his son all that he knew and all that he feared.

Humphrey heard his father without wincing, to the end. And while he listened attentively, he was making up his own mind what he would do.

Charles Perceval, thus uninterrupted, gained courage as he proceeded. As he unburdened himself and cleansed his bosom of the perilous stuff which had so long oppressed it, he felt relieved; and the mere expression of his grief in words had that blessed effect, so common in the case of sympathetic natures, of making it seem less, or at least more bearable. Yet the sting lay not in his own grief, but in the ruin of his son; and Charles Perceval was not philosopher enough to bear the misfortunes of another with equanimity—certainly not when that other was his only child.

“And now, my dearest boy,” said he, as he brought his “business” to a close, “you know all; and what is to be done?”

Humphrey Perceval’s voice trembled for a moment as he thought of Sybil; but his firmness returned as he looked at his father’s sad face, and read there how much depended on himself: and it was not for an English soldier and an English gentleman to flinch, whether the enemy was clad in blue and armed with rifle and bayonet, or whether he was the immaterial image of anger or poverty or despair.

“Well, my dear father, the first thing for me to do is to send in my papers. Of course I can’t afford to stay in the Guards, and I am not going into a marching regiment, to leave you here, and perhaps have to drag Sybil off to India. Oh, no! I must find something to do; there can be no very great difficulty, I suppose, if a man is not too particular. I must find something

in London, and then we will live altogether here. And as you say we shall have thirteen hundred a year"—he waved his hand as his father would have interrupted him—"and whatever I may make, why, we shall be able to save money. And as to Uncle Walter, I am sure Sybil thought nothing about my chances, or rather yours, of succeeding him, and I had no right to do so if I did; and I daresay we shall be just as happy, after all, without either his title or his estate; besides, he may have no children."

"Of course," said Charles Perceval eagerly, as he clutched at this last straw; and what with his hopes, and his relief at his son's quiet way of looking at the state of affairs, and his admiration of his son's courage and resolution, he walked down to his office with a lighter heart than he had owned for many weeks; leaving the young husband to tell his wife of their altered fortunes.

Sybil was as tender-hearted a little woman as ever wept over a dead canary-bird, but she took her bad news as bravely as Humphrey had done ; and indeed, when he folded her in his arms, and pressed her to himself with fond kisses, and told her that as long as he had her, he could not grieve much for the loss of fortune, and that she would give him strength which he would never have had before to work out himself a new fortune for them both, she thought that there was indeed some sweetness in adversity.

It is in the nature of women to enjoy making sacrifices, especially for those whom they love ; and Charles Perceval on his return home found Sybil—who presented him with a cup of delicious tea—already planning with Humphrey what reductions could be made in their expenses, which would not interfere with any of the comforts and luxuries to which her father-in-law had been accustomed.

Charles Perceval's spirits rose : he was not the same man that he had been twenty-four hours before ; and he kissed Sybil affectionately, and told her she was the good angel of the house. And thereupon followed an amicable controversy, regarding what was to be kept and what was to be given up, which ended, like all other such controversies, in a compromise. Humphrey would give up his clubs and subscriptions as well as the Guards ; all bills were to be called in and paid at once. Sybil positively refused to have either a carriage or a maid—both of which luxuries she had, in the depth of her heart, been looking forward to with pleasure for some time ; and she insisted upon her father-in-law keeping his name on one club. One or two servants, including Mr. Parkins, the butler, were to be dismissed ; some of the pictures and *bric-à-brac* and china were to be sent to Christie's. Sybil would devote herself to household

management, and Humphrey would at once get something to do.

Verily, a happy home and a bright and gentle woman are a wonderful shield against the poisoned arrows that are daily aimed at us by the world, the flesh, and the devil; and he who knows that the moment his step crosses the threshold of his own door he will find peace and love and happiness, has a power and a strength in the great battle of life which every man has to fight out-of-doors, that is little dreamed of by his less fortunate brother.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning Humphrey Perceval went down to the Horse Guards; sent in his papers; wrote to all his tradesmen asking them to make up their bills; sent his horses to Tattersall's; and told all the friends he met at the club and elsewhere, that he had just married, and was going to cut the service; that in fact—for "*bon sang ne peut mentir*" even by what metaphysicians call a *suppressio veri*—he could not afford to remain in the Guards, but that he was going to get something else to do. It grieved him sorely to have to speak of his marriage and his ruin as it were in the same breath, but he deter-

mined not to flinch from saying or doing whatever might be necessary to look his position in the face. But ill news flies apace ; and in a very few days the world knew more or less inaccurately what had happened, as Humphrey found in the averted looks of the "smartest" of his former acquaintances, the coolness of others, and an increased warmth of manner on the part of a few real friends—and some others who for various reasons wished to appear so.

"Sorry you're going to leave us," said Colonel Cecil Vandeleur as he met Humphrey in St. James's Street. "What are you going to do?"

"That's exactly what I want to know myself."

"Why don't you go in for a Queen's Messengership? Lots of fellows who have been in the Guards get 'em. Five hundred a year, and travelling expenses when you are sent abroad, which is devilish seldom."

“Well, it’s not at all a bad idea; I’ll think of it. Many thanks, old fellow.”

Cecil Vandeleur was a good-hearted man, and Humphrey knew his advice was kindly meant; so having considered the matter, and not having been able to think of anything better himself, he mentioned the idea of a Queen’s Messengership to his father after dinner that night.

“I fancy they are very difficult things to get,” said Charles Perceval, “but I’ll write to Digby Assheton about it.”

And he did so.

Two or three days afterwards he put the following letter into his son’s hand.

“Private.”

“F. O., April 9th, 18—.

“MY DEAR PERCEVAL,

“I have had your son’s name put down for a Queen’s Messengership, as you will see by the enclosed letter, but you must not be too sanguine of success. The

appointments are very much sought after, and I fancy the Chief has a private list as well as the ordinary one. However, as the limits of age are 25 to 35 there is plenty of time for you to work any good influence you may have. Could not Audley help you?

“Truly yours,

“DIGBY ASSHETON.”

The enclosure was as follows:—

“F. O., April 8th, 18—.

“DEAR MR. ASSHETON,

“I will with pleasure put down Mr. Perceval’s name; but he must not take this as a promise of appointment, for my list is a very long one, and there is very seldom an appointment vacant.

“Very truly yours,

“GRANDON.”

This was certainly not encouraging. It

was quite clear that even if he ever got an appointment, which seemed sufficiently unlikely, it might be years before it came ; and meanwhile he wanted something to live on and something to do. The next day he invested five shillings in a red book which professed to open to the reader the door of admission into every department of the Civil Service ; and he found after an attentive perusal that whereas he was too young for a Queen's Messengership, he was already too old for a clerkship in any of the Government offices, and that in fact almost every bureaucratic door was closed against him. This made him feel somewhat desperate, and finding that supplementary clerkships at the War Office were open to young men of his age, and that the examination to be passed seemed little more than a nominal one—he little knew the powers of the Civil Service Commission in the matter of vulgar fractions—he wrote to a friend in the War Office

to ask what could be done. The next day he received the following answer.

“W. O., April 16th, 18—.

“MY DEAR PERCEVAL,

“I do not think a supplementary clerkship in our office would suit you at all; and I am not sure whether you could get one if you desired it. The fact is we prefer men who are not what we should call gentlemen, and who have had some office experience. But Lowe has just reduced the pay from $10\frac{1}{2}d.$ an hour to $9d.$, and I do not suppose you would care to work for that. Why don't you try the F. O.?

“Truly yours,

“PERCY BOUCHER.”

“Ninepence an hour,” said Humphrey to Sybil, after they had both read over the letter—“Let me see; say ten to five. Seven times nine—sixty-three, about five shillings a day. Why, a bricklayer gets

about ten; and then he mayn't use more than one hand. However, five shillings a day—say six pounds a month. I'm afraid it would not help our housekeeping very much; and it's scarcely what one may call a profession, you see."

"Besides," said Sybil, in her quiet practical way, "it seems you most likely could not get it."

"Ah yes," said he, sorrowfully.

"But, my darling Humphrey, I could not have you slaving away in an office for five shillings a day. It would pay us better to get rid of William, and make you clean the plate and open the hall-door!" And she burst into a merry laugh.

At length, after some further study of the red book, and much consideration between Humphrey and Sybil, it was decided that the Civil Service of the Crown offered no career to the ex-guardsman, and that, as he was really anxious for something to do,

and was even ready to do almost anything, he would see if anything could be found in the City.

The next morning accordingly he studied the advertisement sheet of the great City Journal, and found many tempting advertisements of partnerships and secretaryships which would have been completely satisfactory in every way, were it not that the payment of a sum varying from £500 to £5,000, "to be fully secured," was a *sine quâ non* for aspirants to almost every appointment.

However, Humphrey wrote to one of the advertisers, and although the answer was so unsatisfactory that he proceeded no further in that particular matter, he regularly studied the advertisement sheet of the *Times* for a considerable time, paid many visits to the City and other places, wrote an immense number of letters, and had a number of interviews—brought about after a greater or less degree of correspondence and trouble—with more

or less disreputable-looking individuals who were generally the "agents" of some mysterious "principal," and who were always to be found in some out-of-the-way office which looked as if it did not belong to them. These gentlemen generally pressed him to invest some money in the "undertaking," which, considering the wealth and importance of the undisclosed principal, seemed to Humphrey quite needless, and considering that the yearly salary he was to receive frequently amounted to the gross sum he was asked to "put down," seemed a somewhat strange "financial operation."

Those who did not want money asked for testimonials and references. With regard to the former Humphrey had none, nor did he quite know whom he could ask for any, nor what he could tell them to say; and he felt much more inclined to ask his questioners for certificates of character and solvency, than to bother his friends

to compose letters of recommendation in his own favour. So these civic negotiations led to nothing.

“Why don’t you try the Stock Exchange?” said one of his old acquaintances who knew he was looking out for “something to do,” and who almost ran up against him in Lombard Street one day as Humphrey was returning from a fruitless interview with a gentleman who wanted £750, “to be devoted to the development of an invention of the utmost importance regarding an article of general consumption,” in return for which Humphrey was to receive a salary of £250 a year, and 25 per cent. on the £750!

“The Stock Exchange?”

“Yes. It’s open to anyone. Why Charlie Marshall and Ruggles—you remember Ruggles?—are doing splendidly—making pots of money.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yes, indeed. Now you go and see Marshall; you’re so near his office. I’d go with you, but I’m just hurrying back to civilized parts.” And he went his way.

Humphrey was a little dejected at the continued failure of his endeavours, and he did not at all relish the notion of applying to an old pal for what was really Money, though veiled under the more conventional language of Work—employment—something to do. He would rather apply to strangers, only they would want *testimonials*; and Humphrey began to realize how difficult it is to attain independence, especially for a man who belongs to no regular profession, and is thus, so to speak, an outsider everywhere. And indeed poor Humphrey was beginning to feel very much on the outside wherever he went.

But there was one place where he was very much at home indeed; so he put off his visit to Charlie Marshall, and wended his way to

Queen Street, Mayfair, and raised his own spirits by giving as cheerful and entertaining an account as was possible of the day's adventures and disappointments to his brave little wife.

CHAPTER V.

SOME days afterwards, having followed up an advertisement, regarding a secretaryship, to a more apparently satisfactory stage than had been reached in the course of all former negotiations, and having tendered the name of the family solicitor as a reference, he thought it right to call on that gentleman, not only to mention the liberty he had taken, but also to ask his advice in the completion of the negotiations.

Mr. Johnes was anything but the conventional lawyer of the Tulkinghorn type. It is true he had his office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, but beyond that, and the fact that he also

dealt in law, he had nothing in common with Sir Leycester Dedlock's solemn man of business. He was a man of about fifty years of age; florid as to the face, his hair thin and streaked with grey, and his beard somewhat greyer; a dullish-looking man, with an off-hand, almost abrupt manner, which gave one the impression that he did not care to take the trouble to look wise—an impression which was strengthened by a blue and white necktie with a horse-shoe pin, and garments generally rather sporting than subfusc. Yet Mr. Johnes was very far from being a sporting character, and he attended very regularly at his office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and, in his own commonplace way, he was a very good man of business.

Humphrey knocked at his door, and was ushered by a dingy clerk into a sort of dingy anteroom, and after a little whispering was finally shown into the presence chamber, where Mr. Johnes stood looking somewhat

vacantly out of the window. In a few words Humphrey explained the object of his visit.

"Oh, quite right to mention my name, I'm sure, if you like; but you ought not to have anything to do with things of this sort," said Mr. Johnes.

"How do you mean?"

"Why the fellows who get up companies and associations of this sort, you know, are generally impostors and very often swindlers."

"Ah, yes; but this particular man wants no money, you see."

"Perhaps not; but he wants you to work for him——"

"Oh, I am quite ready to do any sort of work!" broke in Humphrey.

"I dare say you are," said the man of law; "but not without pay. Now, of course I know nothing about this man, but I don't suppose you will ever see a penny of his money. You'd have a great deal of work

to do that you wouldn't like, I'm sure, and at the end of the half year, if the whole thing hadn't gone smash, which is most probable, the fellow would tell you you did not suit, and kick you out; and advertise for another flat to supply your place. He would know well enough that it wouldn't pay you to sue him. You wouldn't like to have your affairs dragged before the public, and he'd probably swear that it had been agreed that your salary was to be contingent upon profits, and that there were none, or something of the sort: and if you did get a verdict against him, he would probably run through the Bankruptcy Court."

This was an agreeable vista! But Humphrey saw at once that his adviser was probably right. He had had his doubts before, and now he was sure of it, that chance companies, and the answering of chance advertisements, would afford him no career. But he plucked up his courage. He would ask

Mr. Johnes if he could suggest anything. He had come for a business talk: so he would at least learn all he could. The attorney would at all events certainly not take him in, and he might have some good news for Sybil after all. "But how do people get secretaryships or directorships of bonâ fide companies or undertakings?" said he.

"Why, my dear sir, they are all given away long before an outsider like yourself knows that such a company exists, or that such an undertaking is even contemplated."

Ah, dear! there it was: outsider again!
"But who are the insiders?"

"Oh, men who are all 'in' with plenty of City people or promoters of companies, who have great influence somewhere or other, or who have some special knowledge, or who have been clerks in offices from the time that they were sixteen years of age. There is no good your thinking about anything in business," continued Mr. Johnes, in his abrupt

way. "You've got no connections, and you are too old to begin without them."

Ah! there it was. Connections, Interest, Dependence! And all Humphrey wanted was independence. He wanted to be allowed to work, and to be beholden to no man. "Is there nothing to be got in England without interest but digging? Then how is it," he said, almost bitterly, "that we hear of so many men who have come up to London with sixpence in their pocket, and who are now millionnaires?"

"Well, first of all, those men had never been in the Guards, nor at Eton, they probably were not married, and were happy, if they could earn a shilling a day, to live on sixpence. Besides, they must have had wonderful luck. You have only heard of the two or three fortunates who have succeeded, and you know nothing of the tens of thousands of others, equally industrious, equally clever, equally deserving of success,

who drag out a weary life on perhaps a pound a week, and maybe die in the work-house."

"Yes ; no doubt," said Humphrey, sadly.

"Oh, no !" said the lawyer, somewhat jerkily, feeling perhaps that his last sentence had been a little too philosophical ; "there's not the least use you thinking about making your fortune in business ; you would be losing your time and perhaps your money. Why don't you ask your uncle, Sir Walter, to get you some nice Government place?"

"Why I am afraid my uncle hasn't the same influence he had when he was in Parliament," said the other ; "and indeed I shouldn't much like to ask him any favours just at present."

"Oh, annoyed with you about your marriage, is he?" said the lawyer, coarsely. "I think you've much better ground to be annoyed with him about his," and he laughed.

The young man winced, and went on

hastily : " Oh, well, I must see what I can do. Anyhow, I will have nothing further to do with Mr. Thomas, and I am very much obliged to you for your good advice. But," said he rising, " I won't take up any more of your valuable time. Good morning."

" Good morning. I'm sorry I can't suggest anything," returned the other smiling, as he opened the door to let him out. " Remember me to your father."

" Certainly ; good-bye : " and Humphrey was walking rapidly away in the direction of Mayfair. Suddenly he stopped, when he was half-way up Great Queen Street, and striking up a by-street to the right, found himself in Holborn, hailed a 'bus, and was once more on his way Eastward. He would have one more try at the City. He would go and see Charlie Marshall, as his friend had suggested to him. At all events, he would not swindle him, and he would see what he had to say. Humphrey was poking about that

network of little courts between Throgmorton Street and Moorgate Street to find Mr. Marshall's office, when he met that gentleman himself, in a marvellously brilliant hat and irreproachable boots, and looking in every way very smart indeed.

"Oh, how d'ye do? What in the world are you doing in these parts?"

"Why I was coming to see you, and I was just looking about for your office."

"Oh, delighted I'm sure! I'm not surprised you couldn't find it. It is only just down here, and very easy, you see, when you know the way," continued he, as he showed Humphrey into a comfortable-looking little room, rather dark, but well-furnished; in a corner of which upon a little shelf stood a queer-looking machine, which went click-clack-click, click-clack-click as it vomited forth, inch by inch, yards of paper-ribbon, such as a conjuror produces out of his mouth, after having previously made a hearty

meal on cotton-wool; and on this paper-ribbon was printed the fluctuating prices of the various stocks and shares that were dealt in by the brokers and speculators on the Stock Exchange. "Now can I do anything for you this morning in the way of business?" said his friend.

"Well, yes; but not perhaps quite in the way you mean. In fact I've come to ask your advice as to getting something to do in the City."

"Something to do? A little speculation, eh?"

"Oh, no! Some work; some appointment."

"I am afraid there are very few appointments in the City. You must go to the Prime Minister or the Home Secretary for that sort of thing; but as to making money, if that's what you want, the Stock Exchange is the place, no doubt."

Humphrey was on the point of saying

that he did not want to make money, but he saw the absurdity of the reply in time to check himself, and turned his half finished sentence into an inquiry of how it was to be done.

Mr. Charles Marshall then and there initiated him into the mysteries of buying and selling stock ; the principle being that you bought what you did not want, and could not afford to pay for ; and sold what you had not got to other people who did not want it ; and then some day or other the busy little ribbon clacked out that you had lost, or clicked out that you had won your money.

Humphrey did not quite understand the thing—indeed his friend's explanation was not particularly clear—but this seemed to him to be the gist of it. But one thing fortunately was quite clear to him ; and that was that a young ex-Guardsman, who did not know the difference between a contango

and a counting-house, had no right to meddle with delicate financial operations of which he understood nothing at all.

The Stock Exchange is an honourable and frequently a lucrative profession, and the due investment of capital is a matter which concerns every man who owns or saves money. But the amateur pursuit of that system, half gambling, half speculation, which the French so happily call *jouer à la Bourse*, has ruined thousands of men before it has taught them that they are not men of business, and sent them back to their West End clubs or their luxurious country houses to learn that guinea whist, or backing the pigeon at Hurlingham, or even keeping three-hundred-guinea horses, and buying seven-and-sixpenny pheasants, are far less expensive amusements than that of making money.

So Humphrey merely thanked his friend for his information and advice ; and asked

“if he saw any way for him to make money by regular work, instead of by speculation.”

“None at all,” said Marshall; “but stay, I might ask Crump—my partner, you know—if he would allow you to join us.”

“Join you! My dear fellow, how kind!”

“Stop a minute. He mayn’t see it. And of course you would only get a share of whatever business you introduced yourself.”

Humphrey’s face fell a little. “I introduced myself!” said he slowly.

The other caught the expression, and said quickly, “You know Crump mayn’t care about it. Indeed, I do not know whether he would like to have a man who knew nothing whatever about the business.”

“Oh, of course I’m very much obliged to you for suggesting it at all, indeed I am; only I don’t quite understand ——”

“Why, my dear fellow, the thing is simple enough. You have plenty of friends and relations who have money to invest. You

get them to bring it to us to invest for them, and we give you, say, half the commission we charge them for doing so. Of course if you brought us a lot of business it might pay us to give you something more. It's the way lots of fellows begin."

It was the old story. It was Humphrey's friends, and not Humphrey himself that must be instrumental in his making his way in the world. However, he would try a little longer to do without them. So he again thanked Mr. Marshall for his kind suggestion, and said, laughingly, "that he was afraid, as he would never bring any business, neither the firm nor himself would make very much out of commissions," and so, hiding his heavy heart under as jaunty an exterior as he could assume, he took his leave, and walked home to Queen Street, Mayfair. On his way through the streets he saw hung up in a shop-window a large card, bearing the following inscription:

"LIGHT PORTER WANTED," and he felt half inclined to go in and apply for the place—but he checked the wild impulse, and continued his gloomy way home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE best wife that a poor man, or rather perhaps a poor gentleman, can have is one who has been brought up in a rich house. She will have had all she wanted as a girl, and she may even prefer the quiet independence of a small house to the more luxurious bustle of a large one. She has none of those gnawing aspirations after hitherto unattainable luxuries that fill the heart of girls who have been brought up by parents with small means, and who naturally look to matrimony as a royal road to all that they have longed for in vain during their virginity.

A girl to whom the daily drive "with mamma," has been one of the small bores of her existence, is much less likely to lament the want of a carriage than she who has often, perhaps, keenly felt the discomforts of going out to dinner in a damp four-wheeler or a frowsty country fly, and who has not unnaturally envied those of her married friends who rolled by her in their smart carriages, and looked forward to the day when she should be led from the altar into a more luxurious "sphere," involving the possession of at least a brougham and one!

Fortunately for Sybil, she had wanted for nothing in her own old home, and had sighed for nothing but a mother's love; and during her stay at Kelvedon, she had seen enough of the weariness of the flesh which can accompany even powdered footmen and a stable full of horses, to enable her to put a right value on such luxuries, even if she

had not done so before; and the one thing she had sighed for, and longed for, was just what she did not find and did not see in the Osbornes' splendid interior, and that was sympathy and happiness and love. This was what she had sought in marriage, and this was what so far at least she had found.

But at the same time, although she was a most angelic little woman, she was still a woman and not an angel, and she could not help regretting—just a little now and then—the change in Humphrey's fortunes brought about by the unfortunate marriage of his uncle. That she never expressed her regret, nor even allowed it to be seen, need scarcely be said, but it combined with other things to make her days not quite as happy as they otherwise would have been.

Her father-in-law was away all day at the Board of Inland Harbours, and Hum-

phrey was generally out too "looking for something to do," and he very often came back in low spirits—which he attempted to conceal with great bravery, but with very poor success. Sybil being a woman—and consequently a better actor, cheered him with her bright smile and words of encouragement and hope; but her heart was often just as weary as his.

The news of what may be called the break-up of the fortune of Charles Perceval had followed so quickly upon the intelligence of Humphrey's marriage, that a comparatively small number of his acquaintances had "called upon" his wife; and indeed as she found it sufficiently difficult to return the visits of those who had been to see her, and as entertaining them at Queen Street, Mayfair, was quite out of the question, she had very few of what are called the pleasures of society to divert or to cheer her. Some of Charles Perceval's

old friends, indeed, came to see her from time to time, and asked the young couple to dinner ; but one-sided hospitality of this kind is difficult to keep up in London, except in the case of very near relations, or between pushing paupers and their easy-going rich friends.

The Percevals had no near relations in London, nor indeed had they by any means a large circle of acquaintances. Charles Perceval and his wife had lived so happily together engrossed in their own pursuits, and perfectly happy in each other's company, that they had not cared to make any effort to cultivate the society of strangers. Humphrey, until he had received his commission, had not known a dozen people in London, and the numerous slight acquaintances that had been made by the young Guardsman were not likely to run after a poor and undistinguished married man.

His marriage had amused Lady Sneer-

well, and had supplied Mrs. Candour with the materials for four or five perfectly true stories. Two or three of Humphrey's favourite partners shook their heads and said "So sad, you know;" one or two of his old pals in the Guards said, "D—d shame the uncle marrying after all; not half a bad fellow Perceval,"—and after a few days, Society had rubbed his name out of her ivory tablets and forgotten him.

Lord and Lady Blisworth, however, had from the first been anxious to be civil to him and his young wife, and many a pleasant evening had Humphrey and Sybil, generally accompanied by Charles Perceval, spent at 99, Grosvenor Place. The first time they had dined there Sybil had been somewhat astonished and not a little awed by the style of conversation: so unlike what she had ever heard either at Silvermere or at Kelvedon. But what struck her most was the part taken by her father-in-law.

With regard to poetry, or almost any form of literature—with regard to art, or the manners or politics of foreign nations, as well as home politics, and every important question of the day, he had something of interest to say; and although he said it with that great modesty and charm of manner which ever distinguished him, he was always attentively listened to. At home he was invariably pleasant and cheerful in manner and conversation, but he never appeared to have very much to say.

Sybil thought over this a good deal. She had been well educated as a girl; and she could still play and sing very agreeably if not brilliantly; but her two years' servitude at Kelvedon had led her insensibly to think that Culture, and above all, Knowledge, were to be confined to the school-room. There seems to be something peculiarly pauperizing to the intellect in the mere exercise of the calling of a governess, and Sybil

had not escaped the influence. However, this first dinner-party at Lady Blisworth's filled her with new ideas: there was a capital library at Queen Street, Mayfair, and she had more leisure than she knew what to do with; so she began to read over once familiar authors, and to make acquaintance with new ones, in French and Italian, as well as in her native tongue.

Young ladies did not learn German in the days of Sybil's girlhood, but she had read Goldoni and Dante as well as *Charles XII.*, and *Télémaque*. She delighted Charles Perceval by asking him very shyly one evening if he could recommend her an easy Italian book to read. He put *I Promessi Sposi* into her hands with a smile, and she renewed her acquaintance with the "soft bastard Latin" in Manzoni's delightful story.

And little by little, very slowly at first, would she talk to her father-in-law about

what she read or what was passing in the world; and as she gained confidence she would talk to her neighbours at dinner at Lady Blisworth's upon topics of greater interest than the weather or the state of the park, and even take a part—a very modest part—in literary or artistic discussions after dinner.

Charles Perceval was delighted—the more so as he was scarcely conscious of the gradual change in Sybil's tone of thought and conversation, which was of a completely *un-aggressive* character. Humphrey, however, as soon as he perceived it was a little frightened. Indeed he had not perceived it at all until Sybil had suggested to him one day, that as he had nothing to do, and as he had given up all his old amusements on the score of expense, he might divert his mind from thinking of his change of fortunes and fruitless search for employment, and find both pleasure and occupa-

tion in study. Pleasure in study! Humphrey was startled.

Sybil did not make her suggestion as curtly as we have put it, you may be sure, but the very idea was sufficiently startling to Humphrey. Pleasure in study! this certainly was something very novel for an Eton boy. Was Sybil going "to come the governess over him?" Had he not loved her as truly as he did, he would have treated her suggestion with all the scorn it deserved; as it was, he winced—and listened;—said it was a very new way of putting things—he would think of it. And think of it he did for some days: and Sybil, like a wise little woman and very unlike a governess, said nothing to him about the matter again for some weeks—when he broached the subject to her of his own accord.

He had watched his wife carefully, both in society as far as he could, and in her own drawing-room; he had compared his

own conversation with that of his father or of Lord Blisworth, or of Mr. Hozier, the ex-Tug; he thought of his own future, and past, and present, and he made up his mind that Sybil was right. And so when he next spoke to Sybil, he very frankly told her so. What he could or would do, was more difficult to tell.

CHAPTER VII.

NOT many days after Humphrey's second "literary" conversation with Sybil, they were dining at Lady Blisworth's in Grosvenor Place. Mr. Hozier was there too: so was old Mrs. Shirley, their neighbour in Queen Street, Mayfair, and Monsieur de Gaillard, one of the secretaries at the French Embassy, and Mr. and Mrs. Prescott, who had just come back from a six months' tour in India, and one or two other pleasant people including a Mr. Adeane, a young barrister, and his friend Phipps, a rising artist, somewhat of a *dilettante*, who had just come back from Italy, where he had as usual been

spending the winter. There must always be some decided difference, as well as some decided tie, between the partners in every true friendship. In the present case, Phipps was rich—and Adeane was poor; Phipps was lazy—and Adeane was studious; Phipps was romantic—and Adeane matter-of-fact; but they were both passionately fond of art, and some forms of literature; they were both good talkers and fond of cultivated society.

Mr. Phipps took down Sybil, and found her a most appreciative listener, and a most agreeable companion.

After the ladies had left the room, Humphrey found himself next young Adeane.

“Perceval, do you know my friend, Mr. Adeane?” said Lord Blisworth kindly, seeing that they were hesitating, after the manner of Englishmen, as to which of them should commence the conversation.

Humphrey bowed.

“Mr. Adeane is on the high road to the Lord Chancellorship, but I’m afraid it’s rather a narrow way at first. Is it not so?” said the host.

“It would need to be broad indeed to give space to all who wish to walk it; as it is, there is plenty of standing room, but it is very difficult to move forwards.”

“Slow walking, I suppose?” said Humphrey, thinking he must say something, after a slight pause.

“Yes; but I doubt very much whether any one can make any progress at all on his own feet; you have got to prevail upon one of those powerful beings of another order, called attorneys, to take you up and carry you over the heads of the crowd before and around you. Two or three lifts of this sort get you into a much less crowded part of the road.”

“Nearer the woolsack,” said Lord Blisworth.

"Yes, much nearer, and when you have got so far, it's all pretty plain sailing, and you ought to be able to get on well enough yourself."

Humphrey at once took the deepest interest in the conversation. Here was ground over which his own thoughts also had travelled. Here he was at home. What, was independence a mere dream of his? Could no one do anything of himself or for himself?

"*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte,*" said Lord Blisworth.

"*Dimidium facti qui bene cœpit, habet,*" said Mr. Hozier.

"*Il più duro passo è quello della soglia,*" said Phipps, "and as you know no attorneys, and are not likely to make the acquaintance of any, sitting all day long alone in chambers, you had much better come with me to Rome next year. An apartment on the Pincio will not cost you much more than

that dismal little room of yours in Lincoln's Inn ——"

"Come, you mustn't abuse Old Square," said Adeane.

"Old Square indeed! Yes, old parchment and dust square!"

Lord Blisworth took advantage of a momentary pause to separate the friends, and turning to Phipps, he said—

"By the way, what did you think of the works of the young sculptor, Signor Popoli? Did you see his Jason?"

"Oh, yes"—and as he turned to give his opinion regarding that very remarkable young artist, Humphrey said to Adeane—

"Do you not find it very dull sitting all day long in chambers with"—Humphrey hesitated—"with no—that is, I think you said—very little to do."

"Oh, dear no, I have plenty to do: not many briefs, not much law work, you know; but I do a good deal of writing."

“Writing?” said Humphrey.

“Yes. Reviewing chiefly, and articles of all sorts for the magazines, and so on.”

“Dear me,” said Humphrey, looking rather surprised; and then, not knowing quite what to say, “How jolly!”

He had sometimes wondered in a lazy way who were the mysterious individuals who wrote those smart reviews in the *Saturday*, or the articles in the numberless Reviews and Magazines that lay on his club table; and now he was actually sitting next one of them.

Adeane was quite sharp enough to see, or rather *feel*, his surprise, and with a view of further enjoying it, he said—

“Do *you* ever write for anything?”

Humphrey was very near saying that he had never written for any thing more important than his regimental leave, but he checked himself, and contented himself by saying that he was not at all a literary character,—and he thought of Sybil—and

that he much regretted it, that he had been in the Guards, and that at present he was doing nothing, and would be very glad to have something to do.

He did not mean to say quite so much, but the manner of his new acquaintance was very friendly, and he continued his conversation with him until they left the dining-room to join the ladies.

On their way upstairs, Lord Blisworth drew Humphrey back a little from the others, and said—

“I was very glad to see you talking a good deal to young Adeane after dinner. I asked him here specially to make your acquaintance. You will find him an excellent fellow in every way. He is a perfect gentleman, but he is not well off; he is clever and hard working, and I’ve no doubt he will do well. And he is one of the most *dependable* fellows in the world. You ought to know him.”

Humphrey's thanks were opportunely cut short by their entry into the drawing-room. He found that Mr. Adeane had already been introduced to Sybil; and he went up and paid his respects to Lady Blisworth; but he took occasion, in the course of the evening, to go up to the young barrister, and ask if he might call on him some day at his chambers in Lincoln's Inn.

"Certainly, most happy," said Adeane, half flattered, yet inwardly wondering what the ex-Guardsman could want in Old Square. Before he took his leave that evening, however, Lord Blisworth, quite casually as it were, had told him something more about Humphrey Perceval, and it amused him to think that perhaps after all they might discover that they had something in common. Before the gentlemen had been long in the drawing-room the conversation became general.

"One of the most remarkable features of

the literature of the present day," said Mr. Hozier, "is the enormous amount of talent and mental power that is expended every week and every month in periodical literature."

"Aye, and one may say every day too," said Mr. Prescott; "look at our newspapers."

"Well, I don't think that our newspaper literature is as excellent now as it was some years ago; see how the *Times* has fallen off; and there is nothing that can be called good writing in any of the others. Besides, the mere number is not very great. There are only five, or, if you count the *Morning Advertiser*, six morning papers in London. Just look at Paris—there are about thirty-six."

"Yes," said Lord Blisworth; "but how enormously inferior a French newspaper is to an English."

"Yes, in every way but in the literary merit of the leading article."

"The *Pall Mall Gazette*," said Mr. Prescott, "is I think perhaps the best written paper nowadays in London, and it was better still before the death of Jacob Omnium—and poor Lord Strangford."

"What a loss he was to the country," said Lady Blisworth, "I suppose no one knew so much about the affairs of Eastern Europe as he did, nor understood them so well."

"No one," said Hozier; "but then no one believed him."

"That seems to be the usual fate of those who know more or better than their neighbours," said Sybil, timidly, "I forget who it was that said, *Si j'avais la main pleine de vérités, je me garderais bien de l'ouvrir*."

"It is very true, as well as very witty," said Lord Blisworth.

"It was Fontenelle," said Phipps.

"But it was a little cowardly, I think," said Sybil.

"Oh yes, he was a cold-blooded creature, you are quite right, Mrs. Percival," said Mr. Horier; "you would have agreed with Madame de Tencin, who said to him one day, *Que je vous plains, Monsieur. Ce n'est pas au cœur que vous avez dans la poitrine; c'est de la cervelle—comme dans la tête.*"

"Oh, I dare say he took it as a compliment," said Sybil, "men are so vain."

"Yes, Frenchmen," said Adeline, dryly.

"But how about our English Reviews," said Mr. Prescott, who wanted to hear Mr. Horier's views upon our periodical literature.

"You must not be too hard upon our reviews," said Lord Blisworth, "you might hurt the feelings of Mr. Adeline; I was about to say that there was nothing like them in the world."

"A fine wholesome English sentiment!" said Phipps.

"Come, come," said Mr. Prescott, "is not

that a little too strong; what about the *Revue des deux Mondes*?"

"I beg pardon, my consideration for Mr. Adeane carried me away. I suppose there is nothing superior to the *Revue* in either hemisphere; (even our *Fortnightly* Review cannot manage to come out more than once a month,) and then the matter is so varied, the criticisms so sound, and the style always so good in the great French periodical, that we have certainly nothing to compare with it."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Prescott.

"But I wished to refer," continued Hozier, "rather to the great waste of literary power and literary talents in our English periodical literature, than to the excellence of that literature itself. How much better in proportion is the average review or magazine article than the average book."

"I am not sure that I quite agree with

you," said Adeane; "I think it is perhaps that you have time to read the articles, and not to read the books."

"Upon my word, it would be very hard to find time to read all the books, or even all the articles, that are published every day in London," said Hozier; "but I think the fact is, that at the break-neck pace that everything is going now-a-days, it is the authors who have not time to devote to the writing of an entire book, but who are able to pay as much attention to the composition of an article as may be necessary for a work of a dozen pages."

"Yes," said Mr. Prescott, thoughtfully, "want of time—in both readers and writers, that is no doubt the great literary misfortune of the present day."

"But I think," said Sybil, after a pause, "that the great charm of the periodical literature of the present day is, that one gets a variety of short articles on the most in-

teresting topics, written by those who know most about that particular subject."

"Yes," said Hozier, "precisely. You see as a rule writing books now-a-days does not pay—I don't know indeed that it ever did; whereas writing articles certainly does; so you see an immense number of busy men, barristers, clergymen, men of every profession, who would never dream of writing a book, can easily be prevailed upon to devote some of their spare time to the preparation of a short article on a subject with which they may happen to be intimately acquainted."

"The days are past," said Lord Blisworth, "when it would be possible for any one man to undertake a periodical, in the way that Johnson wrote the *Rambler* and the *Idler*, or Swift the *Examiner*, and Steele the *Tatler*."

"But then," said Mrs. Prescott, "perhaps no living man could have written Johnson's Dictionary."

“Pardon me,” said Phipps, “we must look across the water for that. Everyone who knows *Littre’s* great work, must admit that France has the honour of having produced the greatest of Dictionary makers.”

“Undoubtedly,” said Adeane; “but it is a curious thing that there is no such thing as a good modern English Dictionary. I mean, of course, anything like *Littre*.”

“Richardson’s, I suppose, is the best,” said Phipps.

“Yes, certainly, but it is scarce and a little out of date; and there is nothing but those two Yankee productions, Webster and Worcester, which are common enough.”

“It is very strange,” said Sybil, “that the only good and accessible Dictionaries of the English language should be by Americans.”

And so the evening wore on, until at length Humphrey and Sybil drove home together in a hansom to Queen Street,

Mayfair; and Humphrey lay long awake—wondering on what conceivable subject or subjects he was capable of enlightening and entertaining his fellow-men, through the medium of a Magazine article.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN a small and somewhat dingy room in that classic locality known as Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, sat Francis Adeane, looking over long slips of printed matter, busily engaged, in fact, in correcting the proofs of an article of his which was to appear in the next number of the *Monthly Review*.

Two or three briefs—on which the fees had never been paid—lay neatly tied up with red tape on a small table near the door, and the book-shelves on the walls were fairly well-filled with volumes, whose backs at least were bound in that pale leather resembling ill-baked pastry, and generally known as “Law Calf.”

Francis Adeane was an orphan. His father had been a clergyman—a poor younger son of a good family. Francis had been to a public school, where he had learnt to play cricket, and to Oxford, where he had learnt to spend money, and it was not until his father's death, a few weeks after he had taken his degree, that he knew to what straits his parent had put himself to provide an expensive education—or more correctly, an education in expense—for his only son. His mother had died many years before. Although he was an only child, he inherited but a very small patrimony at his father's death; and finding that his father's cousin Viscount Adeane, the head of the family, lord of ten thousand acres and twenty thousand a year, declined to do anything for him beyond paying his fees on call to the bar, amounting to ninety-seven pounds thirteen and fourpence, he set to work to make his fortune as a barrister. At first he was very

sanguine of success. He had fair abilities, and he determined to work hard. He read law diligently,—and very dry reading he found it. He attended the various Courts with exemplary regularity, and his face soon became known to all the ushers. And finally, he would have always been found by clients at “Chambers,” when he was not “at Westminster.” “Would have been,” because, as clients did not as a matter of fact call to see him, it would be incorrect to say “was.” He went circuit, too, and found it a very expensive mode of spending his time ; but wise people told him it was the only way to make a connection ; and without a connection he could do nothing. However, he made no connection, and did nothing. He knew no attorneys in town or country, and the attorneys very naturally gave their business to men whom they did know. A stranger, indeed, from time to time gave him a brief, but always

omitted to pay the fee, and although the young barrister was very glad to do the business for nothing for the sake of getting his name known, it so happened that none of these chance briefs ever led to anything better. There is a good deal of luck in all success; and nowhere is it more needed than in the case of a barrister without a "good attorney connection." In course of time, however, Adeane had contrived—for even luck is rarely perverse in every direction—to get some work for one or two well-known reviews, and was able to get articles on various subjects published in some of the magazines. This literary work about paid for his legal expenses, it rendered him infinitely happier than before inasmuch as it gave him something to do, and it made him feel at least that his profession cost him nothing. He had a couple of hundred a year of his own, and he always managed to keep out of debt.

On the morning in question, he had just

finished correcting the proofs of his review, and was folding up the slips, when there was a knock at the door. Knocks at his door were not of very common occurrence. For the first two or three years of his professional life he had thought every knock announced the approach of an ATTORNEY—though why any particular attorney should have sought him out he would have found it very hard to say—but of late he had grown somewhat callous. No barrister can open his own door, so a minute boy—called a clerk—is usually kept for that purpose, and upon the present occasion, the boy having, with a due sense of his professional importance, asked the visitor his name, shut the outer door to prevent his running away, and mysteriously entered his master's apartment, saying, "Mr. Purcell, sir."

"Purcell, Purcell," said Adeane, "I don't know—but pray ask him to walk in."

The door opened, and Humphrey entered.

“I hope I am not disturbing you,” said he, holding out his hand.

“Oh dear me no ! Delighted to see you ; pray sit down.”

“Thank you.”

“Excuse me for one minute.”

Adeane enclosed the proofs in an envelope, directed it, and called out in an important voice “Wiggins.”

“Sir.”

Wiggins made his appearance.

“Take this at once to Grant and Graham’s ; there is no answer” ; and then, turning to Humphrey, “I’m sure you’ll forgive me—business you know ; and now I’m entirely at your disposal.”

“Oh, I’m afraid I have nothing of any importance to say ; I thought I would come and look you up as you were good enough to ask me the other night at Lord Blisworth’s.”

“I am so glad you’ve come, I am sure.”

“The fact is,” continued Humphrey, “that

after what you said about writing, and so on, I thought that perhaps you might be able to give me a little advice, though indeed I have no right to ask it."

"Oh, pray do! Anything I can tell you I am sure——"

"Well, about writing," said Humphrey, delivering himself of the word with something of a gasp.

"Yes, but, what sort of writing were you thinking of going in for?" said Adeane, doubtfully.

"Well, upon my word, I do not know quite what I could do," said the other.

"The fact is that it is rather difficult to get one's articles accepted now-a-days unless one has a great name, or some very special information. A publisher said to me the other day, 'The public don't care a bit about good work; all they want is good names.'"

"Ah! I am afraid there is not much chance then for me," said Humphrey.

“I fear not ; it is always difficult to make a beginning, but especially so at present. The *Bimonthly Century* is to a great degree answerable for this. When you can get an essay on theology by the Archbishop of Canterbury, a poem by the Poet Laureate, an article on military matters by the Commander-in-Chief, on politics by an ex-Prime Minister, on the Eastern Question by the Grand Vizier of Turkey, and so on, in one volume for half-a-crown, the public won't read anonymous articles by you and me, however good they may be.”

“I am sure,” said Humphrey, half mournfully, half humorously, “even if I were to sign my name it would make no difference.”

“I don't know that,” said Adeane, thoughtfully. “If you were to write something about the Guards, for instance” (Humphrey started), “or even something about London society, ‘The Smoking-Rooms of the Clubs,’ or some-

thing of the sort ; 'The Manners and Customs of Guardsmen,' for instance."

"I would not do it for the world," said Humphrey, somewhat warmly. "That is to say—I beg your pardon——"

"Oh, I quite understand. I think you are quite right. I was merely telling you, in what I may call a business sense, what your name was worth. But if you like to try your hand on a short article, or a little story, or anything you feel inclined to write, I shall be most happy to give you a line of introduction to some editor or publisher—if you don't mind taking it."

"Oh, you are really only too kind," said Humphrey, whose voice spoke his gratitude more clearly than any words at his command.

"Only above all things do not make it too long."

Humphrey thought the caution quite superfluous, as he pondered how he could

possibly spin out any composition of his to the requisite length for "print;" but he only said, "Very good;" and after a little further conversation, in which he expressed his hope that Mr. Adeane would come and call some day at Queen Street, Mayfair, he took his leave in higher spirits than he had found himself in for a very long time.

CHAPTER IX.

HUMPHREY burst in upon Sybil on his return home with so joyous a face, that she thought he had at last obtained some employment; and although her woman's perceptions were too keen to allow her to feel any great confidence in the literary scheme, she kept her counsel—having nothing better to propose—and looked as pleased as she could. But the next morning she too had her own good news and her own scheme. Looking carefully through the advertisement sheet of the *Times*—a morning exercise she never omitted, even now that Humphrey thought less about secretaryships and com-

mercial employment—she had come upon the following advertisement, which she triumphantly showed to her lord, who sat meditating over his future successes, while he imagined that he was studying the leading articles.

“TO EX-OFFICERS IN THE ARMY, and others.—Pleasant and profitable employment. £5 *a week* may easily be made by gentlemen of energy and good address. No previous experience necessary. Apply at once to Manager, Wolsey House, Bishopsgate St., E.C.”

“If your literary labours will allow you, sir, I hope you will go and see about this. It seems the very thing. And after what your friend Mr. Adeane said about *spécialités*, too. Here it is for you. ‘Ex-officers in the army.’ I suppose the Guards will count!” said she, with a malicious laugh.

“Oh yes, I’ll go and see about it,” said

Humphrey, feeling already quite a busy man. “‘It never rains but it pours,’ you know.”

Whereat Sybil laughed again; and soon after Humphrey was wending his way to the City, deeply meditating over the subject of his first magazine article. The walk was a long one, but he had reached his destination long before he had made up his mind upon this important question. Wolsey House was a large wine-merchant's office. The manager received him in a magnificently-furnished room, offered him a glass of sherry, which was declined, and proceeded, after asking his name and address, to inform him of the mode of making the £5 a week referred to in the advertisement. The manager, like Mr. Marshall, wanted to make a connection, and he offered Humphrey fifteen per cent. on all the orders for wine that he could obtain for the firm which he was to represent.

“The most agreeable part of the whole, my dear sir,” continued he, “will be the satisfaction that you will experience at knowing that you are really doing your friends a favour, inasmuch as all our wines are first-class, and the prices ridiculously low.”

It did not at once occur to Humphrey that if they could afford to pay him fifteen per cent. out of the said prices, and presumably make some profit out of what remained, this could scarcely be the case, but he thought of it afterwards.

“We will allow you to taste samples of every wine which you may desire to introduce,” said the manager; “and you see, that if you can obtain orders every week for only thirty pounds’ worth of wine—and I do not see why a man with your connections should not place three hundred—you will earn the five pounds commission that we speak of; say two hundred and fifty a year.”

Put in that way, it did sound very easy, and very tempting. How comfortable two hundred and fifty pounds a year would make Sybil! He would try. The arrangements were quickly made. The manager was a capital man of business. A dull formalist would have asked Humphrey for references. He knew better. Humphrey's face and place of abode were quite enough. He had no doubt about the ex-guardsman. A few samples would be sent to Queen Street, Mayfair, that very afternoon. A scale of prices, sundry lists, and other papers, were given to the new commission agent, and Humphrey walked out of the office with the proud satisfaction of having at last found "something to do!" Now it only remained to do it. And after all it would not take up his whole time, and he would therefore be able to turn his attention—when not engaged in *Business*—to LITERATURE.

It was only as he neared his home that

he began to wonder how he should get orders for wine. He thought over all his acquaintances, and decided one by one that he could not ask them. It would look as if he did not think very highly of the wine they had given him. After all, he was not a wine-merchant, and he had no right to know how much a dozen his friends gave for their light claret.

He might ask Lord Blisworth, perhaps, much as he should dislike doing so, and he had no doubt that he would order some wine to oblige him; but Lord Blisworth always had remarkably good wine at his table, and he might not care to leave his own wine-merchant for Wolsey House. And the wine might not be good after all. Well, he would taste the samples and see. In due time the samples came. The wine was excellent. Commercial prospects were talked over with Sybil, but she was by no means pleased with the new scheme, even though it was one

of her own finding out. However, the next day Humphrey, who could not make up his mind to "call for orders," wrote two letters to two acquaintances—not to Lord Blisworth, and anxiously awaited the answers. They were almost identical. His friends regretted very much that they had just filled their cellars; and as they had every reason to be satisfied with the way their wine-merchants—who were in each case old family friends—had treated them, they were sorry that they could not, &c., &c. Humphrey was, of course, much disheartened, and made up his mind to go next day to Wolsey House, pay for the samples, and own his inability to do anything for his principals. On his way to the City he overtook a slight acquaintance of his, Lord Albert Melton, and they walked along together in the direction of Clubland.

"My dear fellow," said his lordship, "can you tell me where I can get some

good brown sherry. It is a devilish difficult thing to find."

Humphrey's heart beat high. Here was a chance. "Well, I think I can; but let me tell you beforehand, I have some interest in the information I am going to give you."

"How do you mean? You haven't got a vineyard at Cadiz—or somewhere?" said Lord Albert, doubtfully.

"Oh, no, but I am to get a commission on the wine that my friends buy from Wolsey House."

"Oh, all right," said the other; "wine good, I hope? What's your price?"

"Well, at 60s.," said Humphrey, "they have some that I have tasted, and it is really very good."

"All right; the more I get, I suppose, the better for you. Put me down for twelve dozen. And where do you keep your samples?"

“Oh, there are some at my house, 17, Queen Street, Mayfair.”

“Good ; I’ll call there some day. Perhaps we may do some more business.” And he turned into a fashionable club.

Humphrey went on to the City, but not to hand in his resignation. On the contrary, he handed in Lord Albert’s order, and received in exchange a slip of paper intimating that he was credited with £5 7s. 1*d.* He was so elated that he ordered a few more samples, and returned in triumph to Queen Street, Mayfair. Lord Albert was not at all an intimate friend of his ; indeed, he was a dissipated fellow, for whose company Humphrey had never felt any attraction ; and yet at the present moment he felt almost as if he liked him, and hoped he would call some day as he had suggested. Sybil seemed less pleased, but she said nothing.

Meanwhile Literature was not quite for-

gotten. Humphrey, indeed, was dreadfully exercised in his mind to find a *subject* on which he could write an *article*. He looked over files of old magazines, but could draw no inspiration from his researches. At last Sybil suggested that he should write a story. "Quite a short one, you know." And accordingly Humphrey set to work.

But what was he to say? A beautiful young lady might be rescued from drowning by her lover. The idea was, as it happened, not particularly original; but he found great difficulty in getting any further. However, he set resolutely to work, made up his mind to write something for a certain number of hours every day, and at the end of a fortnight he had elaborated what might be called a short story at great length and without much coherence, which he finally rolled up and carried off in triumph to Lincoln's Inn. His spirits were a little damped

by being told by Mr. Wiggins that his master was "at Westminster," and not liking to leave his MS., he was compelled to bring it back with him to Queen Street, Mayfair.

On his arrival he found Sybil in tears. What could have happened to frighten that brave little woman? Humphrey was both distressed and alarmed.

Well. It seemed that soon after he had left the house, Lord Albert Melton had called, and asked if Mr. Perceval was in. The door had been opened by a maid-servant, who, after the manner of maid-servants, had said "Mr. Perceval is out, but Mrs. Perceval is at home." His lordship had accordingly been shown in; had introduced himself in a very off-hand way to Sybil; had asked for samples of wine—and whether the "mixture of liquors" was too much for him, or whether he had already partaken of alcoholic beverages before his arrival, or

whether Sybil's quiet beauty had been itself too inflammatory for his lordship's passions—he had behaved to her in a manner as offensive as it was inexcusable; and she had finally been obliged to resort to the bell in order to prevail upon him to leave the room.

Humphrey's blood boiled with indignation. He would go and find Lord Albert, and thrash him within an inch of his life. Sybil implored him to be calm—implored him, for her sake, to do nothing rash, and finally prevailed upon him to promise that he would do nothing till next day. *La nuit porte conseil*. And next morning Humphrey was ready to listen to reason.

Sybil had at first been doubtful whether she ought to have told her husband what had taken place or no; but the more she thought it over, the more certain she felt that she had done right. And so she had. At

her earnest request, accordingly, the next day Humphrey contented himself with writing the following letter, which he sent off by post in the afternoon.

17, QUEEN STREET, MAYFAIR,

"Tuesday.

"MY LORD,

"After your behaviour to my wife yesterday, you can scarcely be surprised at my requesting that you will never enter my house again; and that you will consider all our relations, whether social or otherwise, are completely at an end.

"Yours faithfully,

"HUMPHREY PERCEVAL."

Humphrey had written a long fierce letter at first; but Sybil, who learnt from him that Lord Albert was a man of decidedly bad character, felt that the least said would be the soonest mended; and that a letter which would admit of no answer would be by far

the best to send. And she was so far right, that Lord Albert took no notice of the letter, and she and Humphrey tried to forget him as soon as they could.

As his only customer had turned out so badly, however, Humphrey felt disgusted with the wine trade in general, and determined to have nothing more to do with Wolsey House. He did not like to face that sharp manager again, however, so he wrote a letter, offering to pay for the samples, regretting his inability to do any more business for the firm, and asking for £5 7s. 1d.

The manager's reply was sufficiently startling. Expressing his astonishment that Humphrey should so soon and so suddenly break off his connection with the firm, and his equal astonishment and still greater indignation that the only customer he had introduced should be a "person" whom he had discovered, on enquiry, to be notorious for

never paying his debts, and who was at this moment on the verge of bankruptcy, the manager suggested that unless Humphrey, far from receiving any commission, did not himself pay the £36 due to the Firm from the customer whom he had introduced, he as well as his friend should be exposed.

This was a little too much. *Business* had certainly not treated the ex-Guardsman kindly. To be called upon to pay the debts of a blackguard who had insulted your wife, and to be virtually called a swindler by a touting wine merchant, was really more than human nature could stand. Before Sybil even knew what was amiss, Humphrey had left the house, got into a hansom, driven to Wolsey House, given the manager a piece of his mind with a vigour that would have made the fortune of any magazine article, threatened to kick that worthy out of his own office, written a cheque for £36, demanded a receipt in full—refused even to

have his commission deducted, and flung himself out of the office into Bishopsgate Street, to the mingled amusement and terror of the clerks at Wolsey House.

CHAPTER X.



A FEW days after these decidedly hasty proceedings, Humphrey paid another visit to Lincoln's Inn, and found Mr. Adeane in his "Chambers"—a word, which, like "riches," is a plural word for a singular thing.

Humphrey produced his roll of paper, and explained the nature of his composition as well as he could. He would have given anything to have shown the MS. to Adeane, but he did not venture to suggest such a thing; and Adeane on his part would have liked to have had a look at it before introducing it to a friendly editor, but he thought he scarcely knew Mr. Perceval well enough

to propose it. However, he sat down and wrote :—

“ 3, OLD SQUARE, LINCOLN’S INN.

“ MY DEAR MR. WAUCHOPE,

“ This is to introduce my friend, Mr. Humphrey Perceval, who has a paper which he would like to show you with a view of its appearing in ‘ Burton’s Magazine.’ In any advice or assistance in this matter that you may be able to give him, you will very much oblige

“ Yours truly,

“ FRANCIS ADEANE.

“ BENJAMIN WAUCHOPE, Esq.”

“ How very kind of you,” said Humphrey, as he put down the letter which Adeane had given him to read before closing the envelope.

“ Now, if Wauchope does not care to publish your tale, I will give you an intro-

duction to another man. Meanwhile, you will find him a very nice fellow, and a perfect gentleman, and I think you may speak to him quite freely."

"I am really very much obliged to you. How pleasant it must be to be able to give introductions instead of being obliged to run about looking for them."

Humphrey had not quite got over the bitterness of his Wolsey House experiences.

"Oh! as to that," said Adeane, "no one wants introductions more than myself, and unfortunately they are of the kind most difficult to get."

Dependence again! thought Humphrey. Was this favoured individual, upon whom for the moment he, with all his ideas of independence, was dependent, himself dependent, or still worse, wishing to be dependent upon others?

Ay, Humphrey, my dear fellow, it is the

universal law. Independence is a fine thing, but as this world is constituted, it is impossible, and those who fill the highest positions in it are often the most dependent. Who more dependent upon others than the Prime Minister of England? or the king of those 658 kings of England, the Leader of the House of Commons? And are we not all dependent for our very existence upon our butchers, and bakers, and candlestick-makers, to say nothing of our plumbers and dairyfarmers and washerwomen. And is it not better to admit this mutual dependence of one upon the other, and endeavour to make the inter-relations of life as smooth and as easy as possible? Let us all at least try and do so, as far as we can.

“How do you mean?” said he, interrogatively, in answer to Adeane’s remark.

“Why, introductions to attorneys; we barristers can do nothing without them.”

“Really. Oh, I think I remember some-

thing of the sort being said the evening we first met at Lord Blisworth's. But what do men do who don't know any attorneys," said Humphrey.

"Well, I'm afraid they generally don't do at all, unless, according to the stock legal advice they marry an attorney's daughter."

"What a low idea," said Humphrey, hastily; and then starting, and thinking he might in some way have disparaged the legal profession in speaking so disrespectfully of legal advice, "I beg your pardon."

"Oh! you needn't beg my pardon, I am sure," said Adeane, with a smile. "I entirely agree with you. Marrying for money as a profession is bad enough, though a rich wife is a very good thing too for a poor man—only unfortunately rich girls generally marry rich men; however, you can at least choose your wife from any class you will. But to make your wife subsidiary to your

nominal profession, to consider her as a sort of feminine incarnation of briefs, a magazine of litigation, and above all to be restricted in your choice to a class like that to which litigious attorneys usually belong, is positively disgusting."

Humphrey was delighted at this very decided expression of opinion, and the "electric chain" having been so happily struck, and a sympathy established between the two young men, the conversation flowed easily to the question of marriage, considered from many points of view, and the connection other than matrimonial which might or might not exist between men and women. And they talked of virtue, and vice, and friendship, and love, and society, and religion. And the time passed rapidly away, until at length Humphrey reluctantly took his departure with every intention of returning before many days had elapsed, and made the best of his way to Compton Court,

where Mr. Wauchope edited *Burton's Magazine*.

After a preliminary scrutiny by a clerk, Humphrey sent in his letter of introduction, and was immediately ushered into the presence of a tall gentlemanlike looking man, who begged him to be seated, received his MS. with a bow, inquired after Mr. Adeane, and, after a few civil nothings, asked Humphrey if he would call on that day week, by which time he would have read the MS., and be in a position to talk to him about it. Humphrey assented, and took his leave, much pleased with what the day had brought forth.

Eight days afterwards Humphrey Perceval returned to Compton Court, and was again ushered into the presence of Mr. Wauchope.

"I have read your paper," said the Editor, "and I am afraid it will hardly suit us."

"Do you think it is worth publishing

anywhere?" said Humphrey, bluntly, "Mr. Adeane said I might speak freely to you, and I should really be very grateful for your criticism."

"Well, if you ask me, I should say it certainly bears the marks of being the work of an—inexperienced writer."

"It is the first thing I ever wrote."

"Then you should not be discouraged by its shortcomings," said the other. "It is not quite the style of thing that we want for our magazine, but if I were you I should certainly take it to some one else. You might look over it first, though—one or two improvements might suggest themselves to you—and a little pruning would do it no harm."

Humphrey thanked the Editor very sincerely, for his manner as well as his advice was kind and friendly, and taking up his rejected MS., he repaired to Lincoln's Inn for comfort and fresh advice.

"My dear fellow, you must not be

discouraged; you could scarcely have expected to get your very first attempt accepted without more ado," said Adeane. "Do you mind letting me have a look at it?"

"Oh, with pleasure," said Humphrey, eagerly. "Only I am ashamed that you should have the trouble of reading my rejected trash."

"I don't suppose it's trash at all, and I dare say I may be able to advise you better where to take it, when I know what it is like," said Adeane. "Come, let me see the MS."

"What, now?"

"Yes, there is no time like the present; and you can read one of my articles in print, while I look over yours in MS.; only a fair exchange," said he, handing him the current number of the *Cornhill*, where Humphrey read a very pleasant paper on "Correggio" by F. Adeane.

Meanwhile, the author—who had said, "I

hope you will allow me to make a note here and there, I shall feel so much happier reading an MS. with a pencil in my hand—" was taking great liberties with Humphrey's composition; so much greater than he had at all intended, indeed, that he felt constrained to make many apologies to the young writer, when he had concluded. For which apologies Humphrey very heartily assured him that there were no occasion whatsoever.

Adeane then wrote a brief note of introduction to another editor, recommended Humphrey to take the MS. home and make a few alterations, adopting such of his own suggestions as he should think desirable, and half frightened at his kind-hearted presumption, immediately changed the conversation to other topics.

"I was talking to you the other day about the difficulty of an outsider getting on at the Bar," said he, "and the various ways some

men endeavour to get within the charmed circle of Attorneys' favour."

"Yes, I remember," said Humphrey, who was thinking much more of the difficulty he would find in amending his composition.

"Well, some young fellows in good society, especially if they have relations with pleasant houses, induce their friends to invite attorneys to their dinners, and even get their mothers and sisters to make up to them." Poor Adeane had neither mother nor sister; and his relations who had good houses very rarely remembered to ask him—much less his attorneys to their dinners!

"Disgusting, isn't it?" said he.

"It is indeed," said the other; but Adeane felt rather than saw that the subject he had so abruptly introduced did not at the moment interest his friend. However, it had served his purpose; and, after a little further conversation on indifferent topics, Humphrey took his leave, and went home to re-write

his tale. Before doing so, however, he submitted it to Sybil's criticism, and after much discussion it was arranged that she should amend and finally copy out the MS. In its new form, it was submitted by Humphrey to the new editor, but after some delay, it was pronounced by him, also to be unsuitable. Then, unwilling again to trouble Adeane, it was sent to a well-known magazine without further introduction than a letter from Humphrey to "The Editor," by whom the MS. was returned a few days afterwards—unopened, and "declined with thanks."

At length a sudden thought struck the author. Why not write about something which he really understood and knew? He sat down, and in three or four hours, which seemed to pass like a score of minutes, he had finished a most spirited little sketch of a day's fox-hunting, which, with no literary finish, was full of life, and freshness, and

vigour, and which pleased Sybil so much more than the tale, even as amended by herself, that the first composition was at once abandoned, and "A Day with the Quorn" sent in its stead to the Editor of *London Bells*.

Many days—weeks—passed, and Humphrey had almost forgotten the existence of his MS., when one morning at breakfast the following letter was received by its sporting author.

"London Bells.

"April 29th, 187—.

"Sir,

"The Editor accepts 'A Day with the Quorn.' Proofs will be sent in a few days.

"Yours faithfully, *for Editor,*

"J. K. B.

"H. PERCEVAL, Esq."

Humphrey's joy knew no bounds; and Sybil shared it to the full; and sure never were "proofs" more eagerly expected than

those which made their appearance a few days afterwards, and which inspired Humphrey with so much awe, that he scarcely ventured to correct them. Once corrected and dispatched, however, he flew to apprise his literary friend Adeane of his good fortune.

“Delighted, my dear fellow, and once more let me congratulate you with all my heart!”—“I only hope the poor fellow will get paid,” said he to himself, as soon as Humphrey had left his Chambers and returned to Queen Street, Mayfair, to plan the execution of great literary schemes in conjunction with Sybil.

CHAPTER XI.

THE day after Humphrey had sent back his first corrected proofs to the editor of *London Bells*, he was sitting in the dining room in Queen Street, Mayfair, meditating another article for that most appreciative magazine, when the visitor's bell rang violently, and Captain Bourdillon was shown into the room.

"My dear Bourdillon!" said Humphrey, somewhat astonished.

"I wanted to see you alone, so when I learned you were here, I refused to go upstairs. I do not want to trouble Mrs. Perceval at this hour of the day, but I

want your advice and assistance with regard to a most important matter."

All this was said hurriedly, almost excitedly, before Humphrey could beg his visitor to sit down, and assure him that he would do anything for him in his power.

Bourdillon was an old "pal" of Humphrey's, they had been tolerably intimate in the regiment, but after Perceval had left the service, Bourdillon had been even more friendly than before: he had called at Queen Street, Mayfair, had made Sybil's acquaintance, and had frequently insisted—with her entire approval—upon Humphrey's dining with him at the Guards' Club. Bourdillon was a young man who had been brought up to "great expectations;" he had been educated in expensive habits and tastes by an extravagant father, who, dying two or three years after his only son Cecil had got his first commission in the Guards, had left barely enough to pay his widow's jointure,

and allow the young officer five hundred a year. Cecil Bourdillon immediately reduced his expenditure, but he already owed money at the time of his father's death, and he found it exceedingly difficult to know exactly how and where to begin to retrench. At length he determined to exchange into a less expensive regiment, and the exchange was actually arranged with a captain in the 4th Royal Lancers, when a crisis in his financial affairs came on. He had applied to one or two of his richer friends for temporary assistance; he had been, to his infinite surprise, refused by them all; and he had now turned to Humphrey for advice. And this was Cecil Bourdillon's business.

Humphrey paused a few moments to think. A great deal passed through his mind in those few moments, and he did not see how anxiously Bourdillon looked into his face. Advice, yes. But money? What had he? And how about his father?—about Sybil?

Temporary assistance. Would he ever get his money back again? And then Sybil again. Would it be fair to her? Would he be justified? He looked up almost mechanically, and he saw Cecil Bourdillon's honest face looking anxiously, eagerly for his reply; and he hesitated no longer.

"Look here, old fellow, if you will tell me everything, I will do all I can to help you." Had Humphrey wanted any reward, the expression of Bourdillon's face as he grasped his hand, and the voice in which he uttered but a word or two of thanks, would have been almost sufficient recompense.

"Come!" And Bourdillon told all. Debts, bills, the Jews, an execution; his exchange almost complete; his mother who must know nothing; his trustees who of course *could* do nothing to help; his friends who *would* do nothing; the urgency of the case. It was Thursday. If no arrangements were made by Saturday, he would be sold up and

ruined. The hopefulness of his position if he could but just tide over the present crisis. Humphrey felt that something could be done: but how to do it did not seem so easy. Suddenly a thought struck him—Adeane! He had begged him to apply to him if he ever had need of any legal advice or assistance. But could he bring a friend? He hesitated; yes, he would.

“My dear fellow, I’m not a very good man of business, and I think you ought to have better advice than I can give you. Do you mind coming with me to a friend of mine?”

Bourdillon’s face fell a little; he thought it seemed a little like “shirking”—“Oh, I don’t know ——” he began hesitatingly.

“Now, there is a great friend of mine—a lawyer, and such a clever fellow.”

“Not an attorney, I hope.”

“No, a barrister; but why?”

“Why, because I’ve just come from our old attorney, and I never was so disgusted in my life. The fellow’s had thousands out of my poor governor in his time, and he refused point blank to do anything for me at all.”

“Really.”

“Yes, I was only more disgusted with one fellow I spoke to—confound him!—that young Lamont; you know him. Well, I asked him if he could help me about the bill; and he said he had promised never to put his hand to a bill as long as he lived! Promised! I wonder who he promised; and if he made any more promises of the same kind. If he promised never to spend any money except upon himself, he certainly keeps it—and the young beggar has ten thousand a year if he has a penny.” Bourdillon spoke bitterly.

Humphrey, to bring him back to the point, said somewhat abruptly :

“Well, shall we go and see my friend

Adeane." Something in his voice recalled Bourdillon to himself.

"I beg your pardon, my dear fellow, for railing as I have been doing. Let us go and see your friend by all means. It is most kind of you."

They took a cab and drove to Lincoln's Inn.

Adeane was fortunately in. Humphrey went up first, and explained with many apologies what he had done.

The barrister expressed himself regarding the pleasure it would give him if he could advise to good effect, and his willingness to try, in a way that completely set Humphrey at his ease as regards the "liberty" he had taken; and Bourdillon was brought in, to recapitulate to Adeane's intelligent ears, the story of his embarrassment. The man of law then asked a few questions, made notes, cast up some figures. At length, he called "Wiggins!"

"Yes sir!" The "clerk" appeared.

“Is Mr. Cook in Chambers?”

“No, sir. He’s at Westminster.”

“Captain Bourdillon, will you allow me to say a few words to Mr. Perceval in the next room?”

“Oh, of course.”

Adeane took Humphrey into Mr. Cook’s room, and said gravely. “My dear fellow, it’s all plain enough. But nothing can be done without a little ready money—say £200; and that bill for £300 must be renewed. Who is to provide the ready money? Who will accept the bill?”

“I will,” said Humphrey, very quietly.

Adeane looked at him steadfastly.

“You know that however honourable may be your friend’s intention, there is still some risk.”

“I am ready to take it.”

Adeane would have said more, he scarce knew what. And he determined to act instead. They walked into the next room.

"I think everything can be satisfactorily arranged if you will leave the whole thing to me," said he to Bourdillon.

"Not really," gasped out the young officer, turning to Adeane; "My dear sir—"

"No thanks, pray; they are all due to your friend Mr. Perceval, and I hope you know how much you owe him."

"Oh, all right," said Humphrey nervously.

"I'm sure,—"

said the other at the same time.

"Now there's no time to be lost," interrupted Adeane, "we must talk business. I have one or two very disagreeable things to propose to you, Captain Bourdillon; I'm sure you'll forgive me."

"Oh, pray say anything; I'm ready to do anything, and once I'm out of this mess I'll—"

"Very good; then I begin.—My dear Perceval, I don't think we want you just

at present. You will find the *Times* in the next room.—How much ready money can you let me have to-morrow,” said he as soon as Humphrey had taken himself off.

A pause.

“Well, say £10?”

“Oh, we must have much more than that,” said Adeane, who was determined to try him, and see how far he was worth helping, before proceeding further. “It’s only for a short time—as I understand; you are quite sure of the £1,000 for your exchange in a month’s time?”

“Oh yes, or sooner.”

“Well, then, you must raise money on all the property you have, that you will not absolutely require within a month.”

Bourdillon started.

“Do you mean pawn?” said he indignantly.

“Yes I do,” said the other very quietly.

The officer paused. He would have said, "Never!" but he hesitated.

His fate hung in the balance, for Adeane had quite made up his mind.

"It is the only way you can help Mr. Perceval."

"I will," he said with a terrible gulp.

He was saved.

"It would never do," said Adeane, changing his tone, "for an officer in the Guards to be seen at a Pawn Office."

"But nobody knows me about here."

"No matter; you bring the things to me this afternoon and I will manage the rest," said Adeane. "That shall be my share."

Bourdillon looked at him with admiration. Each of the young men saw that the other was in earnest.

"You will also bring me all the bills that you have by you, and a list of all your debts, and we will dine together at the 'Cock,' and make everything straight. It is now

half-past-twelve. Will you be with me by five o'clock?"

"Yes."

"*Au revoir* then."

"And Perceval?"

"Never mind him, we have some business to do together before he goes away."

He showed Bourdillon out and brought Humphrey in. His manner had all at once acquired the decision which comes from responsibility—and being engaged in work which is completely mastered. He cut short Humphrey's protestations.

"Do you know the amount of your balance at your bankers?"

"No. But I have some stock that I can sell."

"We'll see. Call at your bankers on your way home: let the clerk take out your net balance and send me a note of the amount by a Commissionaire at once—and call on me here to-morrow at eleven."

Humphrey felt that the affair was in a master's hand, and he left the room in a state of mingled perturbation and joy.

Adeane sat down and began to work. In an hour or so he went out to lunch at an eating house in Chancery Lane, and took the opportunity of purchasing several bill stamps of various amounts, returned to chambers—filled them up, and was soon ready to receive Captain Bourdillon.

About half-past-five he appeared bearing two huge bags, and saying, "that there was a four-wheeler downstairs with two guns and a rifle, and one or two other bulky articles."

One of the bags contained a magnificent dressing case and some silver goblets: the other an assortment of pins, rings, chains, and other knickknacks. Adeane made a list of all—as the officer had not done so—from his dictation.

"Watch and chain," said he quietly, when Bourdillon had come to an end.

“Oh, I suppose so,” said the other ruefully, taking from his pocket a gold repeater and the massive chain which secured it.

“I suppose it will come to no harm.”

“Oh no, it will be all right—Now, will you wait here while I go out. I’ll take on your cab.”

“By all means.”

Adeane took out his own watch and chain and laid them on the table, put Captain Bourdillon’s into his pocket in their place, took up the bags and went downstairs to the cab.

“Ah, he is one of the right sort,” said he as he drove away. “And I’ll pull him through—if I had to pay myself!”

In an hour he was again in chambers. He pulled out a bundle of tickets and a bundle of notes.

“Two hundred pounds. It is a good lump.”

“I dare say the things cost a thousand.”

“No doubt, but you will get them all back again. Shall I take care of the tickets?”

Adeane unlocked his strong box, put the tickets and the notes into it, and was locking it up, when Bourdillon said, “By the way, I’ve brought you a ten-pound-note too. I thought I had fifteen, but I found I had’nt; but I shall want something to go on with, you know.”

“Of course, keep your ten pounds. I hope we shall not want it.”

Bourdillon’s confidence in his new adviser insensibly increased.

“But now,” said Adeane locking the box; “now for your outstanding bills.”

First of all there was the WRIT, that had primarily brought about the crisis. £227 17s. 4d. at the suit of a money lender, representing a loan of £100. Then there was a bill of exchange due the next day for £300, which was in the hands of a horse dealer, who had refused to renew without further

security. Then there were bills from tailors, bootmakers, hosiers, livery-stable keepers, and a dozen others, amounting in all to some £700. After all the debts were a mere bagatelle. Say £1000. But then the assets that morning had been £10. No wonder poor Bourdillon had been at his wits' end. Before the lawyer and the guardsman parted that night after their dinner in Fleet Street, the former had received a mournful note from Humphrey saying that his balance was much smaller than he had had any idea of, viz., £197. The latter had signed various documents, among others one which ran somewhat as follows :—

June 3rd, 18—.

*Two months after date pay to the order
 of Francis Adeane the sum of Three
 Hundred Pounds, £300.*

Cécil Bourdillon.
Payable at
MESSRS. COX & CO.
value received.

The moment Adeane was alone, he hailed a cab, and drove off to a house in Half-Moon Street, Piccadilly.

“Is Mr. Phipps in?”

“No ; but he is at the St. James’s club.”

It was but a step. Adeane went on to the club. Phipps was in the hall.

The two friends had a long and interesting conversation, which lasted till past midnight.

Arthur Phipps had constantly urged Adeane to apply to him if he should ever be pressed for money.

“What the deuce is the good of being rich if one may not be allowed to help one’s friends,” said he.

But Adeane, who lived prudently within his income, had never taken advantage of his requests.

“I have a great favour to ask you,” said Adeane, after a few moments’ casual conversation.

"I am so glad," said the other unaffectedly.

"I want you to lend me £300 for two months. It is to save a bill accepted by a friend of mine from getting into the hands of the Jews. You can have the bill if you like."

"Stuff and nonsense: keep the bill. I will send you a cheque from home by to night's post. I cannot tell you how glad I am of the opportunity. But I hope you know your man. Bills are nasty things."

"They are, but thanks to you, this one will remain locked up in my desk instead of flying about the market; and as to knowing my man, I am saving two men, and that without the smallest risk to myself: very cheap good-nature, I assure you," said he. "It is *you* who are obliging three people."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, do not let the other two know it," said Phipps.

"Certainly not."

The next day Humphrey signed the bill already accepted by Bourdillon, and gave Adeane a cheque for £150.

“That will leave you a balance of over £40,” said the barrister; “you cannot exactly launch out on such a sum, and it will scarcely make your banker’s fortune; at all events you have saved your friend, and he has behaved like a man. But remember you have made yourself liable to pay £300, this day two months, and though I do not think there is any probability of your ever being called to pay, you must not forget your liability.”

“No: but why does *your* name appear on the face of the bill.”

“Oh no matter, all right,” said he—and abruptly changed the subject.

In the course of the day Adeane had exchanged this bill with Arthur Phipps for a cheque for £300—with which money he had taken up Bourdillon’s bill from the horse

dealer, to that gentleman's infinite surprise. He had called on the money lender with the writ relating to the £227 17s. 4*d.* in one hand, a roll of bank notes in the other, and threats of exposure in his mouth ; he had induced that worthy to take £175 and give a receipt and discharge in full ; and with the remaining £175 in his hands, he had paid off a dozen small claimants who had become troublesome and pressing, and some of whom, sniffing Bourdillon's embarrassments in the air, had actually threatened proceedings. He met Bourdillon in the evening, at the Guards' Club, and having taken his I. O. U., as a matter of form, for £350 in Humphrey's favour, he told him that he might conclude his negotiations for the exchange in peace and security, for that he was a free man ! Bourdillon held his head higher among his friends at the club that night ; and having parted with Adeane after many mutual assurances of satisfaction and goodwill, he laid his

head upon his easy pillow, vowing—and the oath was as deep as it was silent—that if ever Francis Adeane or Humphrey Perceval stood in need of a friend in their turn, they should find one in Cecil Bourdillon.

CHAPTER XII.

As Humphrey had only intrenched upon what may be called his private resources, in order to assist his friend, he had not said anything about the affair to his father; especially as Charles Perceval, who had never quite recovered the shock he had received at the time of the double marriage of his brother and his son, was in a low and delicate state of health. He had put off consulting a doctor for some time, and when he had done so, "Nervous" was the only answer that could be drawn from the physician.

Humphrey, however, had told Sybil of all

that had happened, and she had replied that he had done quite right, like her own Humphrey, and that she felt sure all would be well, and so forth. She was also very much struck, though perhaps less so than her husband, with the way in which Mr. Adeane had managed the whole affair.

The Sunday after—Lady Blisworth was always at home on Sunday afternoons—Humphrey called in Grosvenor Place and found her in conversation with a visitor in whom he recognised a well-known author and statesman.

After a word of introduction, she said—

“We were talking about Spain.”

“Yes,” said the ex-Minister, “but about the Spain of two hundred years ago. I have no great opinion of the modern Spaniards, as a rule—but I think Don Quixote was the best man that ever lived.”

“But he did not ever live,” said the lady.

“Pardon me : he lives to us.”

“But what do you think of his creator, Cervantes?”

“I think he was a vastly inferior being to his creature the Don.”

“Can the creature ever be superior to the creator?”

“In literature: in works of the imagination, yes, certainly! Just as Pygmalion’s statue was more beautiful than the artist himself. There is something of inspiration in all works of genius, and the divine spark may create something far more brilliant than the author through whom it shines.”

“Well, perhaps so. Goldsmith for instance, who ‘wrote like an angel, talked like poor Poll.’”

“Fair enough. Were any man’s works less like his life?”

“But about Don Quixote?” said Lady Blisworth, who was unwilling that the conversation should glide away into the sayings and doings of Noll or Davey at “The Club.”

“Oh, he lives, undoubtedly,” said the Minister. “He lives to us ; he is the same to this age as if he had absolutely wandered over the Plains of Castile and watched in the Sierra Morena. We cannot, indeed, find his tomb, but he has left us his great example. In him, Cervantes has given us the picture of a great and benevolent philosopher, and in his Sancho, a complete personification of the world, selfish and cunning, and yet overawed by the genius that he cannot comprehend : alive to all the material interests of existence, yet sighing after the ideal : securing his four young foals of the she-ass, yet indulging in dreams of Empire.”*

“But what do you think of the assault on the windmills ?” said Lady Blisworth.

“In the outset of his adventures, as in the outset of our lives, he was misled by his enthusiasm,” replied the other. “Without which, after all, we can do nothing ; but the

* *Venetia.*

result is, Don Quixote was a redresser of wrongs, and therefore the world esteemed him mad. But if you will not allow me to say that Don Quixote the man still lives, let me say that Don Quixote the book is one of the wisest and best, as well as one of the wittiest and most humorous books in the world. You have read it in the original?"

"I am sorry to say I have not."

"Then I leave you with a great treat before you," said the Minister, as he rose and shook hands with Lady Blisworth, bowed to Humphrey, and left the room.

"And how is your father?" began Lady Blisworth, as the door closed on the retiring visitor. "We have not seen him for an age, and I hear he is not very well."

"Yes, indeed, I am afraid he is not strong, but Sybil takes great care of him."

"That I am sure she does."

"Oh, well, I hope he will get stronger;

he has had a good deal of trouble on my account, I fear."

Lady Blisworth would have no doubt found a happy answer even to this somewhat embarrassing remark, had not she been relieved—or interrupted, as the case might be—by the door opening and the servant announcing Colonel and Mrs. Lynch.

"Please don't go, Mr. Perceval," said she to Humphrey, as he made a move to depart after the first greeting. "Allow me to introduce you to Colonel Lynch, who has lately returned from India—Mr. Perceval—Mrs. Lynch."

After a general bowing, Lady Blisworth carried off Mrs. Lynch to sit by her on the sofa, leaving the two gentlemen to entertain each other.

"What part of India were you in?" said Humphrey to the Colonel by way of a start.

"Oh, up in the north-west. Capital country. Fine climate, if you don't drink

too much *Brandy Pauny*; wish I was going out again."

"Really?"

"Yes; good pay, good servants, and plenty of 'em—all you want."

"Yes; I suppose it is a fine place for soldiers," said Humphrey, somewhat vaguely.

"Yes; it's a fine place for soldiering—always something going on there. But as far as getting on is concerned, it is a far better place for a man who is not a soldier."

"How?"

"Why, civil employment is the most paying thing out there; and then there are fortunes to be made in tea, and tobacco, and sugar, and cotton, and silk, and deuce knows what. Why, men leave the service every day and take up something of this sort. Anyone may make a fortune out there—anyone," said the Colonel, authoritatively.

A sudden thought struck Humphrey. How would India do for him?

“But I suppose the climate is trying for ladies?” said he, thinking of Sybil.

“Not a bit of it! Look at Mrs. Lynch there; she has not been at home for five years until now, and I think she’s been fifteen years in all in India, and she’s never had a day’s illness.”

The sight of Mrs. Lynch was eminently reassuring. She was a remarkably healthy and pleasant looking specimen of a Colonel’s wife.

“Oh, the climate is not half as bad as it is painted, I dare say,” said Humphrey.

“Are you in the service?”

“No, I was. In the Coldstreams.”

And the conversation flowed into other channels.

“Very nice people,” said Lady Blisworth to Humphrey, as the Colonel and his wife took their departure. “You found him a little blunt, I dare say—a thorough soldier; honest as the sun; and she is really a charming

person. I am glad you met them. Now, be sure and remember me most kindly to your father," said she, as Humphrey took his departure, "and tell him to come and call on me next Sunday. I am sure it would do him good, and I should like to see him so much."

But Charles Perceval was no better that day week, and he did not call on Lady Blisworth.

Humphrey's article duly appeared in *London Bells*; and his letter to the editor asking for payment not having been answered, he determined to take a walk up to Lincoln's Inn and call on Adeane, whom he had not seen since he had so greatly distinguished himself as a restorer of shattered finances. He found him in, working away as usual at something for the press, and he was welcomed with more than usual warmth.

"Well, I thought I was never going to see you here again. I was positively going to

call in at Queen Street this very day to ask Mrs. Perceval whether I had frightened you away from these chambers by my stern behaviour—in *re* your friend, now of Her Majesty's 4th Regiment of Lancers——”

“Well, upon my word, my dear fellow, you did manage that business well.”

“Wait a bit; you are not out of the wood yet. Don't forget your name is to a bill for £300; and then your loan of £150?”

“Oh, I am sure Bourdillon will pay everything.”

“Ay, if he can.”

“But whether he does or not, I will never forget your kindness in the matter.”

“Kindness, pshaw! It was a little out of the usual course of business—though I hope both you and your friend will bear in mind what I asked you—not to tell anyone of my share in the transaction.”

“Oh, I am sure, as you wish it, not a word shall be said. But it does

seem hard, that what you managed so cleverly——”

“Yes, perhaps so; but then ‘legal etiquette,’ remember. The sort of business I did for your friend is supposed to be the prerogative of what we call the ‘other branch of the profession.’ ”

“The attorneys?”

“Yes.”

“Well, the other branch of the profession refused to help him,—and as far as I can see it has never done very much for you, so I don’t think you need blame yourself.”

“Oh, I don’t blame myself at all. I have my own opinions about legal etiquette, with which I will not trouble you, as they would not interest you at all; but it is one thing doing a thing quietly for a friend, and another thing flying in face of the public opinion of one’s profession. As long as one belongs to any profession, I think one is bound to refrain from openly or publicly breaking any

of its written or unwritten rules—and that is the reason why I have such a contempt for these Anglico-Ritualistico-Catholic parsons who adore the Romish wafer and draw the Protestant pay ; but I heartily wish I was in a country where I could follow my profession as an independent being, and not as a puppet.”

“ Well, do you know, I am beginning rather to disbelieve in independence,” said Humphrey, gravely.

“ There is very little of it in the world,” said the other, “ certainly ; but I was talking to a man last Sunday about India——”

Humphrey stared.

“ Last Sunday—about India ? so was I.”

“ Odd ! Well, it seems that all throughout India, except in the three Presidency towns, attorneys do not exist, and barristers do their business direct with their clients. ’Pon my word, I’ve half a mind to go there ; I am getting sick of this sort of thing.”

“You think of going there?” said Humphrey, “why, so do I.”

“*Les beaux esprits s'accordent toujours,*” said the other, “let us go together.”

Humphrey paused, a little embarrassed.

“I did not think of going just yet—in fact . . .”

Adeane understood; turned the conversation, and did not ask how Humphrey's father was, for fully ten minutes afterwards.

With regard to the magazine article, Humphrey learnt that *London Bells* never paid its unknown contributors; and that being in a semi-bankrupt condition, the editor was very glad to make into “copy” any stray articles that found their way into his box.

This information—delicately as it was conveyed—was not calculated to flatter Humphrey's vanity as an author; but it at least saved him the trouble of writing any

more articles for the same destination, and helped to make him think more seriously about India.

He accordingly said good-bye that day to Adeane, with his mind already full of schemes and plans for the future, and took the opportunity of talking them over with Sybil that night.

“Yes, India may be a capital place,” said that prudent little woman; “but what are you going to do when you get there?”

“Oh, anything.”

“I am afraid that’s too much like what you are doing here?”

Humphrey rather winced,—but he felt she was right. He had no profession like Adeane, and he determined to find out more precisely what he could do—or rather what he could certainly get to do in India, before he set his heart any more upon going there—even in the remote future.

But the future did not seem likely to be

very remote. Charles Perceval grew worse and worse every day. He insisted upon going down to his office, though it was evidently more than he was fit for ; but he struggled on, for he knew what his retirement would mean, and he had made up his own mind that he would die in harness. And he thought he would die happy if Humphrey could only be provided for. But this was not to be.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABOUT six weeks after Captain Bourdillon's visit to Lincoln's Inn, that gallant officer once more made his appearance in the region of Law, and was duly ushered by Mr. Wiggins into Adeane's room. After the first formal salutation he drew from his pocket a letter, and handed it with a great look of triumph to the barrister. Adeane bowed and read as follows :—

“CRAIG'S COURT, *June 18th*, 18—.

“SIR,

“We have the pleasure to inform you that the sum of £1000 has been paid to us this day by Captain Johnstone, late of the 4th Lancers, and now of the Coldstream

Guards, and has been passed by us to your account according to his instructions.

“We are, sir,

“Yours very faithfully,

“*Captⁿ. C. Bourdillon.*”

“Cox & Co.

Whilst Adeane was reading this letter, Captain Bourdillon had drawn from his pocket his cheque-book, laid it down upon the table, and said: “Now I am anxious to do my share of this business, and make all square as soon as possible.”

Adeane went to his strong box and drew out a large packet of papers.

“You don’t mean to say you have got the bill?” said the officer, astonished.

“Yes, you will oblige me very much by not asking me how this comes to pass; it is part of my arrangement with Mr. Perceval.”

“Well, upon my word, you are the very best fellow—I beg your pardon—”

“Pray make no excuses—but I want no

thanks: You see the bill is not due for a fortnight."

"I will pay the money at once," said Bourdillon, rapidly writing and signing a cheque which he handed to Adeane, who struck a match, lighted a candle, and said,

"Now you have a right to receive this bit of paper in exchange for your cheque. But will you allow me——"

"Certainly."

He held the bill to the flame of the candle, and watched it curl up and blacken with evident satisfaction. "Now I'll manage these tickets," said he, "as I did before. There will be some interest, fifteen per cent. I think, for two months; you had better make me out a cheque for £210—or stay, you must give me cash, your name must not appear."

"How considerate you are," broke in the other.

"No, no, but now if you wish to pay

everything you may give me a cheque for Humphrey Perceval for £150; you can make it to his order."

He handed over the document.

"Now we will treat your promissory note for £450 in the same way that we did the bill"—and the flame again devoured the stamped paper.

"I don't like doing things by halves," said the officer, "I will drive down to Cox's and get your £210 in notes, and be back with you in half an hour."

"Do by all means."

"*Au revoir.*" And he went.

Adeane sat down and wrote a letter.

"*Tuesday.*

"27, OLD SQUARE.

"MY DEAR PERCEVAL,

"Come and see me to-morrow morning. I have very good news for you.

"Ever yours,

"FRANCIS ADEANE."

Bourdillon soon came in again, more radiant than ever, with a roll of notes.

"Count."

"All right."

"Now there is only one thing more," said he, very nervously, "nothing that I can say or do——"

"Oh, pray say no more; I am only too glad to have been able to help my friend Perceval."

"Yes, I'm sure; but as far as I am concerned, you know, I shall never be able to make you a proper return for all your kindness; but still, I must ask you to fix—that is, to tell me—in fact you must let me know," said he, with a great gulp which made him quite red in the face, "how much I am indebted to you."

"My dear sir," said Adeane, quietly, "I am happily saved from any difficulty in the matter. The etiquette of my profession prohibits my taking any fee at all. I should

certainly have refused even if it had not been so, but you might perhaps have been offended ; as it is, there is no more to be said."

"But what do you mean," said Bourdillon, confused. "Take no fee?"

"No, we barristers can only take a fee through an attorney."

"Then I'll go and engage an attorney."

"I am afraid it would be no use," said Adeane, smiling at the other's impetuosity ; "but pray say no more about it. I have been only acting for you—or rather, pardon me—for Humphrey Perceval, as a friend. I am only sorry if I have thus placed you under any obligation to me ; but I have to ask you in return not to say anything about my share in the transaction. Now let me go off for your guns and jewellery," said he, hastily ; "will you wait till I come back, and the whole thing will be finished." So saying, he pocketed the pawn tickets and rushed out

of the room, leaving Bourdillon to ponder and wonder over this, to him, completely new and most unexpected instance of the incomprehensibility of English Law.

In less than an hour Adeane returned; took out the list, and checked the things off one by one.

“The guns are downstairs in the cab.”

“Now I quite understand what you said about a fee,” said Bourdillon, who was not at all sure that he did; “you have acted entirely as a friend. Indeed, I had no idea till this moment of the extent of my obligation to you, but before I go I must ask you *as a friend* to confer one more favour upon me.”

“With pleasure, I am sure, if I can do it.”

“Well, you remember the day when you saved me from ruin——”

Adeane made a movement of impatience.

“Oh yes.”

“You took this watch and chain, and put it in your pocket to go away and do what was I dare say one of the most disagreeable things you ever did in your life;”—Adeane did not dissent—“well now take them again for good,” said he, handing them to him, “and wear them in memory of my gratitude and of your great kindness. You cannot refuse.”

Adeane was affected.

“No, I will not refuse. I accept them as a friend, for I am proud of your friendship; and I will wear them for ever, in remembrance of a brave and an honest man.”

“Come, come,” said Bourdillon, who had not expected such an outburst, and who had all an Englishman’s objection to be thanked: “I am very glad you will have them, anyhow—now I must be off with my traps. All clear, I hope? Good-bye, see you again before I join. You’ll make all

right with Perceval. I'll go and see him to-morrow afternoon. Good-bye!" And he was gone.

The next day Humphrey did not make his appearance at Old Square ; but a letter from him arrived soon after midday, saying that his father had been taken suddenly and seriously ill, and that he could not leave the house that day. Adeane got through the work he had on hand as quickly as he could, and went off at once to Queen Street, where he arrived about three o'clock. Mr. Perceval was with his father. Mrs. Perceval was disengaged for the moment and would see him. He thought his news was good enough to justify the intrusion, and he went upstairs.

"I am afraid you have come about that money matter that you were kind enough to take so much trouble about," began Sybil, with a sad smile, dreading further evils.

“Yes, but my news is good; I should not have intruded otherwise. Everything is finally settled. Captain Bourdillon has behaved very well, and I have brought a cheque for Mr. Perceval.”

“Oh! I am so glad,” broke out Sybil, and then checking herself suddenly; “would you like to see my husband, he will be coming down in a moment, and I think I must go up.”

“I was so shocked to get Perceval’s note; I trust your father-in-law is going on well.”

“Thank you, I scarcely know. It was a sort of stroke, and the doctors do not seem to know quite what to make of it;” and she opened the door and walked upstairs with that sad and noiseless step which is only found in the house of the sick.

In a few minutes Humphrey came down, and his first few sentences were uttered almost in a whisper.

“My dear fellow, how good of you to come.”

“Captain Bourdillon is coming this afternoon to see you—to thank you.”

“It is you he should thank.”

“He has done more—see, in spite of all I could say or do, he insisted upon my accepting his watch.” As he was speaking a noisy ring was heard at the front door bell. The young men went down stairs, and met Bourdillon in the hall. After twelve hours of sickness, it is astonishing how ceremony vanishes from a house. A few hurried thanks, congratulations, expressions of regret and sorrow, and Adeane went away with Bourdillon, leaving Humphrey alone with his new troubles. Yet not alone. He went upstairs and asked the most tender of nurses and the most sympathizing of companions —“How is he?”

“I cannot tell, he is very weak. Do go and take a walk: it will do you good.”

“No, no, I won’t leave the house.”

But, what can a man do in a sick-house when he is not actually watching the patient? Humphrey crept about, feeling miserable, unable to settle to anything, wondering what he could do, going upstairs, down again into the drawing-room, out again, fancying perhaps that he heard a noise, and growing lower and drearier at every fresh change of position. Sybil spent most of her time in the sick-room, and as it was pronounced essential that the patient should be kept as quiet as possible, Humphrey only took his place at his father’s bedside, during her brief absences in the course of the day.

A few days after Charles Perceval had been taken ill, Humphrey had written at his request to Sir Walter, to inform him of the critical condition of his only brother. The baronet had replied, expressing his regret in becoming terms at his brother’s illness, and also at his being unable to come up to town

at the moment, inasmuch as her ladyship was daily expecting her confinement. This last piece of news had far from a good effect upon Charles Perceval's health, in the nervous and utterly prostrate condition in which it found him ; so much so, indeed, that when a few days later a letter arrived from Sir Walter announcing that Lady Perceval had been safely delivered of a son, and that both mother and child were doing well, Humphrey thought he was not exceeding the licence of a sick-nurse in making no mention of the letter and of its contents to his father. "It will be quite soon enough for him to learn the news when he gets stronger ; and if he is never to get stronger"— . . . But the day after the letter was received, Charles Perceval asked, "What news from Shipton?" and inasmuch as poor Humphrey was a very bad hand at telling white lies, and the sick man was endowed with that preternatural nervous sharpness which so often is found

in the sick-room, the son's "Nothing" told the father as plain as words could speak, that his worst fears were at last realized. And from that moment his strength visibly declined.

CHAPTER XIV.

AND the days passed on and Charles Perceval grew worse and worse. And Sybil and Humphrey took their turns with the nurse at watching the sick-bed, and acted under her orders. Sybil knew that no inexperienced ministrations, be they those of the most loving wife or daughter, can supply the place of a skilled nurse. The mere management of the sick-room and the exact and intelligent carrying out of the doctor's orders, have to be learned and studied like other duties, and intimate experience of the various phases of human suffering enable the professional nurse to soothe and alleviate, in

cases where loving but ignorant, powerless, expressions of sympathy would only aggravate the unrest of the patient.

There is no nobler calling than that of a sick-nurse, none in which masculine intelligence and strength of mind combined with womanly tenderness, and patience, and delicacy are more needed for excellence ; and to our own age is due the credit of making this discovery. Our fathers lived in the days of Sarah Gamp and Betsy Prig ; we are living in the days of Florence Nightingale, and of the thousand unknown though equally devoted women, both gentle and simple, who are learning their duties in hospitals and institutions, and ministering with intelligence and care at tens of thousands of bedsides.

And the time is surely coming when the nurse will hold her proper place in our estimation, which may in some instances be quite as high a one as that of the doctor, and which should never be greatly inferior to it.

Her opportunities of doing good are obviously greater than those of the physician, clever and even attentive though he be, and she needs but superior skill to have also greater power. And the sooner this is recognized by those ladies who are knocking more or less in vain for admission at the door of what is called the medical profession, the better for Society and for themselves.

“If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?”

“And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?”

But in spite of skill and care and devotion, Charles Perceval grew worse, and it became evident that his life was not to be saved by skill or care or devotion, and that the time was rapidly approaching when he would solve the great mystery, and pass away from this world to that strange country of which

we Christians indifferently assert that there shall be no more sorrow and no more sighing, but that God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes—and that there the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

But Charles Perceval was content to trust himself, with all his imperfections on his head, to perfect Love and perfect Justice; and having been told, as everyone who is tended by Christian men and women should be told, that his end drew near, he partook of that mysterious Feast which was instituted as one of the pledges of His love in Whom he believed and trusted; and died peacefully in his daughter's arms, breathing the name of the wife who had gone before him, and whom he was so soon to rejoin for ever.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLES PERCEVAL'S funeral was, according to the undertaker's notions, the most poorly "furnished" and the most meanly "conducted" affair that he had ever "undertaken." Mr. Perceval had left positive orders upon the subject, and his son had no inclination whatever to transgress them.

There was something absolutely revolting to his mind in the velvets, and plumes, the scarves, and the staves, the rusty black coats, and the crumpled white ties of the coarse, dissipated looking men who conventionally cluster, like obscene birds of prey,

round the dead ; and the many absurdities of a modern funeral, which would be absolutely comic did not their intrusion upon the solemnity of death and the majesty of grief make them at once odious and shocking. Thank Heaven, such savage rites are, in England at least, slowly but surely becoming things of the past.

Only a few of Charles Perceval's most intimate friends were invited to follow his earthly remains to their last resting place.

Sir Walter came up from Shipton for the day, Lady Perceval's illness affording a sufficient excuse for his doing no more than paying the most formal tribute to the memory of his brother. He said a few civil words to Humphrey, however, and begged to be kindly remembered to Sybil ; and, having thus fulfilled his duty as head of the family, he returned to his ancestral possessions, to look after the welfare of his son and heir, and of the lady who had been

good enough to supply that interesting article to the lord of Shipton.

Among those mere acquaintances who assembled at the grave was our friend Lord Blisworth.

“Will you give this letter to your wife? and will you come and see me in a few days?” said he, kindly, looking in Humphrey’s face, and pressing his hand, after the glorious old Church of England Burial Service was over, and the body of their brother had been committed to its original dust, in the sure and certain hope of a glorified and joyful resurrection.

“Yes.”

Humphrey pressed his hand, and they parted. And Humphrey went back to the house in Queen Street, Mayfair, which seemed sadly empty. Poor Sybil seemed wan and worn as she met him on the stairs. They had both been kept up by a sort of unwholesome excitement until this,

and now the last act of the terrible drama seemed fully played out, the curtain was dropped, and they were left alone and in darkness.

No, not quite alone. Sybil opened the letter that Humphrey gave her. It was from Lady Blisworth, and ran as follows :

“99, GROSVENOR PLACE.

“MY DEAR MRS. PERCEVAL,

“Will you allow me to intrude upon your sorrow to the extent of proposing that you and Mr. Perceval should go down to Camford Park for a week or two. The change will be good for you—I do not like to use the word pleasant—in every way. You ought not to stay where you are. You will find no one but two or three old servants at Camford, and you will be in the most perfect privacy, as I have already taken the liberty of writing and telling them of your probable arrival, and warned them not even

to let any one know of your visit. I hope you will start at once. You will find everything ready. We are not going over to Camford for another month.

“Sincerely yours,

“EMILY BLISWORTH.”

There was a practical sympathy about this letter, which was even the more striking from the absence of any of the stereotyped forms and expressions of condolence. Sybil would have refused. The first impulse of every woman is to refuse a favour. But a little reflection told her, as well as Humphrey, that it would be far better for themselves, and far more graceful to Lady Blisworth, to accept, and Sybil accepted accordingly; and the next day they left town for Camford Park.

Before starting, however, Humphrey had put the house upon the books of two or three agents for sale, paid and dismissed all

the servants, with the exception of one maid, written to all the tradesmen for their bills, and to his lawyer asking him to make arrangements for the proving of his father's will, and the winding up of all monetary affairs.

Both Humphrey and Sybil felt more relieved and even happier in the great rooms and galleries of the house, and the quiet shades of the woods and park at Camford than either of them quite cared to confess; for next to Time, Change is the greatest and most legitimate salve for real grief.

And they both talked a good deal and thought still more about what they were to do; where they were to live, and how. On one point they soon came to a conclusion—they could not live in England. They might go to one of the colonies, or to India, and try and find that "something to do" which seemed unattainable in England, and without which it would clearly be impossible to live

on £300 a-year, which was about what was left to them. Or they might go to Brittany or to Portugal, or one of the few really cheap places still left in Europe, where their £300 a-year would enable them to live comfortably, if not luxuriously, without doing anything at all.

But Sybil doubted whether Humphrey would feel luxurious, or even comfortable, with nothing to do, and Humphrey was quite certain that it would be better at least to make an effort, before making up his mind that he was good for nothing, and doomed only to wear out the remainder of his days, blown as a waif into a stray corner of Europe.

But should it be Canada, or Australia, or India? or what other part of the dominion upon which the sun never sets?

The days passed quickly by—what a change from those that had immediately preceded them!—and a fortnight had flown ere they were well aware of it. They

determined with reluctance that they must bring their stay to a conclusion, and Sybil accordingly having written a letter to Lady Blisworth, to tell her how much they had enjoyed their visit and appreciated her kindness, they exchanged the tranquil retreat of Camford Park for the now mournful little house in Queen Street, Mayfair.

The day after their arrival in town Humphrey called, as in duty bound, to see and thank Lady Blisworth. He found her in her boudoir.

“If any one should call while Mr. Perceval is here, say I am ‘not at home,’” said she to the servant who showed Humphrey into the room.

After a few more or less commonplace expressions of gratitude on the one side, and satisfaction on the other, Lady Blisworth said,—

“And what are you thinking of doing now, Mr. Perceval?”

"I scarcely know : the first thing to be done is to sell the house. We must go abroad whatever we do. I am rather in doubt between India and one of the colonies."

"Have you any hope of getting any appointment before you leave England?"

"None."

"I am very much afraid Lord Blisworth will not be able to help you. If the Conservatives had been in power he might have been able to do something ; but as it is—"

"Oh, I am sure he would," said the young man, "but I think I shall be able to make my own way abroad somewhere. A man has not much chance of making a start for himself in England—but it is about my wife that I am most distressed."

"I hope she is quite well."

"Quite well, thank you. But I do not know how she might stand a change of climate, and in the colonies especially, I

fancy, she might have great hardships. It would be no matter for me, you know."

"Then do you think of going out first alone, and leaving her to follow you when you have found out the right place?"

"Yes, I was thinking of doing so; but I have said nothing to her about it, I don't think she would like the idea; and, indeed, I don't know what would become of her all alone, even in England."

"Has she no relations of her own?" said Lady Blisworth, hesitating.

"Scarcely any. None that she cares about. But I might try."

Lady Blisworth did not wish to pursue the conversation any further in this direction, so she said,—

"With regard to the choice between India and any of our colonies, I should say for many reasons India would be the best."

"But the climate?"—

"Is not nearly as bad as it is made out.

In many places, I hear that it is good. And life altogether is very easy there,—very luxurious in fact; so much so that I think ladies as a general rule like the country.”

“Yes,” said Humphrey, musingly.

“And what is more, the mere fact of being an Englishman is a distinction, and likely to lead to employment of all sorts; whereas, in most of the English colonies, one man is as good as another, and the man who can handle a pickaxe would have, perhaps, more chance of success than a gentleman.”

“Well, you shall know as soon as we have made up our minds,” said Humphrey, as he rose to take his leave.

Yes, India is undoubtedly the place, thought he to himself, as he walked up Grosvenor Place. How well Lady Blisworth put it. But still I think I must go out first, and “prospect” a bit. I wonder if those Pevenses in Cambridge Crescent would take

in poor Sybil for a bit. She would dislike it, I am sure; but perhaps it would be better for her than knocking about the world without even a roof over her head. But no, no, it would never do. They were disagreeable enough when they thought poor Sybil was going to marry a man who would be a baronet some day: what would they be now? They would not have her, or if they did, I am sure that mortified-looking old beldame would bully her to death. "A baronet, indeed!" said he, bitterly; and then the thought struck him, why should she not go to Shipton? It clearly was the most natural place for her to go to in the world. How came it that the idea had never struck Humphrey before?—The fact is, that since his marriage he had never been to stay at Shipton, and he had almost ceased to think of it. Not that there was any estrangement between Sir Walter and his nephew; but simply that the two marriages taking place

at so much the same time, and Sir Walter disapproving of Humphrey's as much as he approved of his own, the uncle and the nephew had each, as it were, gone his own way independently of, if not exactly in opposition to, each other.

Lady Perceval had only been in London once since her marriage, and then only for a few days. She had called on Sybil; but she was a cold woman by nature, and her chill invitation to Shipton was not calculated to induce her nephew and niece-in-law to make any serious effort to pay a visit to the great house of the family. Once, indeed, the preceding September, Charles Perceval had offered to go and spend some days at Shipton with Humphrey and Sybil; but Sir Walter and Lady Perceval were engaged to pay some county visits at the time he proposed, and the plan accordingly came to nothing. And as Lady Perceval was rather froglike in her nature, and neither particularly hospi-

table nor particularly generous, and as she scarcely knew either Charles Perceval or Humphrey, and had never seen Sybil before her marriage, and only once afterwards, it was not surprising that she should make no great efforts to bring them down to Shipton.

And as Sir Walter was somewhat annoyed—he could scarcely have said why, but that was of course only a reason for feeling more annoyed—with both Humphrey and Sybil; and as he cared more for his own dogs and horses and guns and game than for the happiness or wellbeing of any or every other human being in the world—Lady Perceval as *his* wife, being to a certain degree excepted—it was no matter of surprise that *he* did not put himself out of his way to induce them to pay a visit to the home of their ancestors. “If they wanted to come I suppose they would say so.”

And considering that Charles and Humphrey Perceval were both proud men: Con-

sidering how great had been their disappointment at Sir Walter's marriage—greater than they had any right to feel, still less to allow ; and Considering the attitude of Sir Walter and his wife after his own marriage, the state of Charles Perceval's health, Humphrey's search for work, and many other causes—the sagacious reader will see no cause for surprise that the friendship between the houses of Shipton Court and Queen Street, Mayfair, should have been of a passive rather than of an active description, and rather resembling what is termed by diplomatists a “benevolent neutrality.”

For all this, there could be no doubt but that Humphrey's idea that Sybil should go to Shipton, was by far the best that had as yet suggested itself to him on that difficult and all-important subject. It was, at least, the first idea that he could communicate to her with anything approaching satisfaction, and he determined to go home and talk it over

with her at once. And as he walked rapidly down Curzon Street, with his mind fully occupied with these weighty matters, he almost ran up against another man who came suddenly out of a house on the same side of the street. Stopping for a moment to apologize, he recognized Colonel Lynch.

“Hallo! Where away so fast?” said the Colonel in a gay and half bantering tone, which he checked on seeing Humphrey’s sad face, his deep hat-band and black gloves; “but I am sorry to see you in mourning.”

“Yes,” said Humphrey, simply. “I have just lost my father.” The Colonel not being very ready with a suitable reply, Humphrey continued, “And I am going abroad, perhaps to India.”

“And a capital place you’ll find it; I wish you every success. What part are you going to?”

“I have not quite decided.”

“Well, if you go to the north-west, I shall be most happy to give you one or two letters of introduction—unless, indeed, you’ve got too many already,” said he, checking himself in the full flow of his good nature.

“No, indeed,” said Humphrey, half smiling. “I shall be most happy to avail myself of your offer.”

“Well, then, don’t forget. I am always to be heard of at the East India Club in St. James’s Square. Good-bye.”

“Oh, India, certainly,” said Humphrey, as he turned up Queen Street, and proceeded to lay his “idea” and his “plan” before Sybil.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Humphrey entered the drawing-room his wife was reading a letter.

“From my brother Harold,” said she; “he has just changed his station, and he likes his new quarters very much. Garmagard,—somewhere in the north-west of India—not far from the Hills. The capital is a large town, he says; with a Government House, and plenty of English people, both civil and military.”

“Suppose we go out there,” said Humphrey.

If he had tried for a month he could not have found so good an opportunity of making

a beginning. The impossibility of living in England they had both already recognized. As to the undesirability of vegetating on the Continent they were equally agreed; but further than that they had not gone. A strange fate that day seemed driving them towards the north-west of India, and they had just come to the conclusion that prudence fully justified them in taking advantage of what chance seemed so pointedly to offer, when a knock was heard at the door. Humphrey was on the point of proposing that he should go out to India in the first instance without Sybil; and it must be confessed that the said knock was, at this critical juncture, at least, as much a relief as an interruption. After a pause, their solitary maid knocked at the door and came into the room.

“Pleaze ’m, a young man of the name of Hardeen wishes to know as if you’ll see ’im.”

Husband and wife stared at each other for

a moment, at length Sybil said : " Oh ! Mr. Adeane. Yes, certainly, show him up."

And Francis Adeane entered the room.

" You don't know of anyone who wants a house about here ?" said Humphrey, after a few minutes.

" No, but why ?"

" Because we are trying to sell this."

" Going away ?"

" Yes, perhaps to India."

" To India ! why, I'm going there."

" You ?"

" Yes, to Garmagard."

" To Garmagard ? why, *we* have just been making up our minds to go there."

" No !"

" Well," said Sybil, " I suppose we had better settle to go, and you must come with us."

There was no resisting such a suggestion ; and before Adeane had left the house that afternoon, it was provisionally settled that

they were all to go out to Garmagard that very autumn.

This most unexpected turn of affairs made it all the more difficult for Humphrey to propose his own plan, and it was not until after dinner that he could make up his mind to do so.

"My darling Sybil," he began, "I think we have quite settled about Garmagard."

"Yes."

"But do you know, I think it would be better for me to go out at first, and see what sort of a place it really is, and what chance there is of my getting something to do, and you could follow, you know, very soon."

"Do you think I should be in your way?" said she, sadly.

"In my way! no indeed. But you know there might be all kinds of hardships and difficulties and——"

"And do you think I should like you to have to face them alone?"

"No, not alone; you see I should have Adeane."

"My darling husband, I am sure my right place is by your side wherever you may have to go; and if there are to be difficulties, it is all the more reason why I should be there too. What right has Mr. Adeane to share your troubles? Did not I marry you for better for worse, for richer for poorer? Besides, where should I go? I believe I should be more trouble to you away from you than with you," said she, changing to a half-bantering tone. "Unless, indeed," said she more seriously, "I went out as a governess again." This finished off Humphrey.

"A governess again, indeed? Never! But I thought perhaps you might go and stay at Shipton," said Humphrey, unwilling to leave his newest idea unventilated—"with Lady Perceval, and Sir Walter."

"Humphrey darling, I would much rather be a governess again." And she sat herself

down upon her husband's knees, and sealed her victory with as tender an embrace as ever decided a lover. And, indeed, Humphrey was no less a lover since he had become a husband. Rather more so.

The next morning when Sybil came down to breakfast, she found a letter from Lady Blisworth. It ran as follows:—

“MY DEAR MRS. PERCEVAL,

“Mr. Perceval tells me he is thinking of going abroad with a view of getting some employment in India or the Colonies. Should he make up his mind to go out in the first instance without you, I hope you will allow me to put in a first claim for a good long visit from you at Camford, where we shall be from early in October until the beginning of next season. I hope we shall be able to make the time pass as pleasantly as may be in the absence of Mr. Perceval. If you will come and lunch here to-morrow

at 2 o'clock you will find me alone, and we can talk over your plans, upon which I have so unceremoniously intruded.

“Sincerely yours,

“EMILY BLISWORTH.”

“There,” said she, handing the letter to Humphrey; “it is lucky we settled yesterday that I was to go with you, or an invitation like this would have given you a great deal to say. But, indeed, I do not know which to admire most, the kindness of Lady Blisworth’s offer, or the delicate way in which she makes it.”

“Ah! she is indeed a perfect lady,” said Humphrey.

“Well, I will go and lunch with her to-day, and tell her as well as I can what we think of her. But, you naughty boy, what made you go and tell her that you were going to leave me behind?”

“Indeed I did not. I only told her of

what I feared you might have to suffer if you came with me at first."

"And what do you think I should suffer if you went away and left me?"

Humphrey thought he would perhaps have suffered nearly as much, and his honest face betrayed his thoughts; and Sybil ceased her badinage for a moment, to tell him how well she knew he had only thought of her happiness, and not at all of his own, in his plans. And then she continued—
"But you were quite wrong, my dear old boy. It was a very stupid plan to think of trying to make me happy by making yourself miserable."

Charles Perceval had died upon the third of July. It was now only the eighth of August, and yet Sybil had, during the last few days, constantly found herself in much higher spirits than seemed at all in keeping with the deep mourning that she wore. Not that she did not regret her father-in-law;

she had nursed him tenderly, devotedly ; she had been not only a dutiful, but an affectionate daughter to him during his life, and she had very sincerely mourned at his death. But somehow or another the revulsion of feeling, from the weary and hopeless watching in the sick room, to the bright fields and shady lanes of Camford Park, the peaceful walks through the woods, and the hopeful conversations with her Humphrey, had assuaged her grief so much—by infusion of new happiness, that she had at length given way to the bright influence of peaceful days in the quiet country in the company of the man she loved.

And she now had something to look forward to. Humphrey would do something in the world ; she would help him. For the last year Charles Perceval's health had evidently been failing, and although she and Humphrey had never said the word to the other, they had both felt that they were, as it

.

were, "waiting for the end." Until that end came no change could take place; no great effort could be made. The end had come; and it was somewhat of a relief.

The next day Lord Blisworth called at Queen Street, Mayfair.

"I am sorry we are going to lose you, my dear Perceval," said he, "but I am quite sure you are going to do the right thing."

"I am very glad you think so."

"Oh, I have not come here to tell you so, but merely to say that I was dining last night at Lady Ventnor's, and I met Sir James Moon: he was governor of Garmagard, and I took the liberty of talking about your idea of going there, and he not only thought the notion a very good one, but he offered to give me letters of introduction to some of the leading civilians there; and I said I would ask you."

"How very kind of you!"

“Not at all; shall I tell Sir James that you would like the letters? I feel sure they would be of service to you.”

“Yes, please do so.”

“We are leaving town in a few days. Parliament is up to-morrow. Will you and Mrs. Perceval dine with us on Wednesday? There will be nobody but ourselves, and we may not have an opportunity of seeing you again in Grosvenor Place for some time to come.”

“I am sure Sybil will be delighted. She shall write and say so to Lady Blisworth.”

“If you please. *Au revoir.*”

And the kind-hearted peer left the room. Humphrey followed him down stairs to open the street-door, and they found the narrow hall blocked by the maid, who made more show than any of the half-dozen servants of an ordinary establishment, and seemed almost ubiquitous, and who was in conversation with a smug-looking man in a frock

coat, who bowed obsequiously to Lord Blisworth and Humphrey, and explained, when the former had gone, that he was a house-agent. The house had not been put upon his books, "but he had a client who wanted just such a house, and hearing it was to be sold he had taken the liberty, &c." Humphrey replied that if he could sell the house and furniture for him, he would be very glad that he should do so; and the agent bowed himself out.

The next day a letter arrived from Messrs. Entwistle and Curlew, saying that unfortunately their client had just suited himself, before they had been able to bring Mr. Perceval's house to his notice, but that they had no doubt that in the course of a few days they would be able to find him another purchaser.

"Capital men these," said he to Sybil as he finished the letter. "Active fellows. I feel sure they will get rid of the house for us."

“I am sure I hope they will,” returned Sybil.

The next day they dined, as had been arranged, at Lady Blisworth’s. As soon as the two ladies had left the dining-room, Lord Blisworth said to Humphrey :

“Now, my dear Perceval, I knew your poor father when he was your own age, and I am sure you will forgive me if I offer you a little bit of advice.”

“Only too grateful.”

“Now you are going abroad : and I think you are acting straightforwardly and wisely : you are going to take your wife with you : I am not quite sure that that is quite so wise ; but you and she must be the best judges of that, and perhaps, after all, you are right. But I think—especially as you are taking her with you—you ought to make an effort to get something—if only a promise—in the way of an appointment before you start. I don’t care whether it is under

Government or in a mercantile house, or what; but I think you ought to have some definite idea, not only of what you want to do, but of what you can get to do where you are going."

Make an effort, indeed! what had poor Humphrey been doing for the last year but making efforts? He said so. Lord Blisworth looked a little surprised.

"And your uncle?"

"I never asked him."

"Forgive me; but do you know I think you were wrong. However, it is of course much more difficult to get anything in England than abroad, and since he has given up parliament, he has not of course the same interest that he used to have. But at the present moment Lord Somerton, the Secretary of State for India, is a friend and neighbour of his, and he would have no difficulty in getting you something by way of a start, at all events."

“Well, I will write to him.”

“I won’t say a word more, but he is the head of your family, and you have certainly, under all the circumstances of the case, some claims upon him. He is a Liberal, as well as a friend of Lord Somerton.”

“I wish you were the head of my family,” said Humphrey, half laughing.

“Oh, it would be no good at all,” said the other; “you know I am a good Conservative, and Lord Somerton is a strong party man. Besides, it appears to me that you have never given your uncle a chance.”

“I will certainly ask him,” said Humphrey.

“But that need not interfere with your taking the letters of introduction I have got for you; even if you get so good an appointment as to be independent of them, you may be glad to make the acquaintance of those to whom they are addressed. Here is one to a gentleman whose acquaintance I made at Homburg, when he was on leave, some years

ago, a Mr. Tynt. I was able to do him a slight service upon one occasion ; so I think I have a right to give you a letter to him, and I am sure you will find him a kind and reliable person, and one upon whose advice you may safely act. He is, I am afraid, my sole Indian acquaintance. But here are two letters I have got for you from Sir James Moon, who was once governor of Garmagard. This one is to Mr. Hildritch, the present governor, which Sir James assures me is almost as good as an appointment itself, and this is to Mr. Grundry, a civilian in high office in the district where you are thinking of settling. Now let us join the ladies."

Nothing could exceed Lord Blisworth's charm of manner to Sybil. He laid himself out to please, to encourage, to cheer, and he abundantly succeeded. Sybil indeed responded, and Lady Blisworth was no less sympathetic, and it was late before the young couple rose to take their leave.

Convienne, partir. The world would be happier if it were not so full of partings: but there are some partings when the heart glows more than it sinks, and which are almost as full of encouragement as they are of regret.

“ Good-bye ! ”

They have left the room ; they have left the house ; they are in a hansom driving through the warm August air ; they are at their own door in Queen Street. It is all over. That delicious evening is numbered among the past, and they have ridden their first stage on the way to India !

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN they reached home that night a letter was awaiting Humphrey. It was from Messrs. Entwistle & Curlew. They had the pleasure to inform him that a gentleman who had "viewed" the house that day had made them an offer in writing, which they enclosed for Mr. Perceval's consideration. "Their" Mr. Curlew would wait upon Mr. Perceval at ten o'clock the next morning to receive his reply. They begged to add that, as the season was now so far advanced, it might be difficult to find another purchaser until after the long vacation.

"True," said Humphrey; "and we ought

to be off in two months. Colonel Lynch told me that early in October was the best time to start. Let us see now."

He had asked £2,000 for the house as it stood; £1,000 for the lease, and £1,000 for the furniture, which included a good many pictures, china, Persian carpets and curiosities of various sorts which had been accumulated by the refined taste of his father and mother during many years.

It went sorely against the grain to sell some of these, but there was obviously nothing else to be done with them. Not only did he want the money they represented, but he clearly could not take them with him. So he had settled to sell everything as it stood.

The present offer was a sum of £850 for the lease of the house, with permission for Mr. Perceval to sell all the furniture and effects upon the premises, and give up possession in a fortnight—September 1st.

“Our Mr. Curlew,” when he called next morning, explained that these most liberal conditions which had been obtained by them would enable him to realize at least £1,250 more by the sale of the furniture and other things, thereby raising the gross price to £2,100, and having everything settled within a fortnight. The gentleman who made the offer was not a “client” of theirs, but they had no doubt he would execute a formal agreement that very day if Mr. Perceval would give his consent at once.

And Mr. Perceval of course did so.

Messrs. Entwistle & Curlew were auctioneers as well as house-agents; and “their” Mr. Curlew “presumed” they would be entrusted with the sale by auction on the premises.

Humphrey saw no objection; on the contrary, they were manifestly the best people to conduct the sale. Within an hour, a clerk was busy making an inventory, and

the very next day the house itself was plastered all over with bills, announcing the forthcoming sale, which was to take place that day week.

“Most active men these,” said Humphrey, “they don’t allow the grass to grow under their feet. They deserve to get on.”

Advertisements of the sale appeared in the “Times;” circulars were sent by post, in which the names of Entwistle & Curlew figured in very large letters; and Humphrey found lodgings in Mount Street, where he and Sybil took up their temporary abode, with all their boxes and the few personal effects which they intended to take with them abroad. This was indeed a move, and they felt already at least half-way to Garmagard. In parting and moving, the *premier pas* counts far more than any other hundred peces on the route.

In the course of this week, too, Sybil paid a visit to her cousin, Mrs. Pevensey, in

Cambridge Crescent. In spite of frigid receptions, she had gone from time to time to see her only relation in London ; she had written to tell her of her father-in-law's death, and had received a gloomy reply ; and she now went to inform her of their plans and intentions, and to ask her if Mr. Pevensey, who had large mercantile connections, could help Humphrey in any way to an appointment in India. It was only a straw, but Sybil did not see why she need not catch at it.

Mrs. Pevensey said that she knew nothing whatever of Mr. Pevensey's business, and that if Humphrey wanted to ask him anything, he had better write to him in the city. Sybil had scarcely expected anything much more encouraging than this ; so she replied that Humphrey would write, and promising to come and say good-bye before they left for India, she took her leave.

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“SHIPTON COURT,
“*Wednesday.*

“DEAR HUMPHREY,

“Your going abroad without any hope of employment seems to me almost as foolish as your marriage, and I cannot do anything to encourage so wild a scheme. As to asking Lord Somerton to give you an appointment, I have always refused — on principle—to ask favours for other people, and I am certainly not going to break through my rule in the case of a nephew of my own. Besides, I am now no longer in Parliament.

“I hope you will reconsider your schemes, and make up your mind to live quietly somewhere in your own country.

“Yours affectionately,
“W. PERCEVAL.”

The first of these was undoubtedly the most serious, though Humphrey did not at first perceive its full meaning and conse-

quences. The second was a rebuff no doubt, but he had certainly laid himself open to it; and he scarcely knew Mr. Pevensey. It would pass. But the third really made him angry. The marvellous inconsequence, the selfishness which strutted under the garb of principle, and the utter flatness of the concluding sentence, made him feel for once a Radical—almost a Communist.

Head of the family indeed! Why—in the name of all human law or of Divine Providence—was a man allowed, as head of a family, to absorb in his own proper person the ten thousand acres of land, or the fifteen thousand pounds a-year which belonged to the family, if it is not for the benefit of the family at large? Now——

Fortunately, these very inflammatory cogitations were cut short by the arrival of “our Mr. Curlew,” who, having paved the way by the despatch, on the previous evening, of the letter that Humphrey had just read, had

followed it up in his own proper person, to "learn Mr. Perceval's pleasure," and "take his orders." There was little to be said to any purpose. Of course the sale must take place. And the next day it did take place.

Two days afterwards, Humphrey received the following account from the energetic house-agents.

Humphrey Perceval, Esq., Dr. in account with Messrs.
Entwistle & Curlew, Crs.

DR.

To sale of Lease of House, No. 17, Queen	}	61	5	0
Street, Mayfair, 5% on purchase money,				
£850=£42 10s., and 7½% on first year's				
rent of do. £250=£18 15s.				

Expenses of auction sale on the above premises :

Printing	}	97	13	4
Advertising				
Inventory and Catalogues				

£158 18 4

Balance	461	6	8
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620 5 0

CR.

By sale of Furniture and Effects, 327 lots,	}	620	5	0
£709 2s. 6d., less 12½% commission,				
£88 17s. 6d.				

A cheque was enclosed for £461 6s. 8d., payable to Humphrey's order, "*in settlement of all accounts and claims due.*"

And this was what represented the £2,100 that those most active house-agents, Messrs. Entwistle & Curlew, had promised Humphrey! He stood positively aghast. He put on his hat and took the bill at once to the agent upon whose books the house had originally been placed—Mr. Maull, an old-fashioned house-agent in the very street in which he was then living.

"Oh, yes," he said, "a common trick. You can do nothing. You see, he did not guarantee the purchaser that he introduced to you. You made no arrangements with him as to the expenses of the sale by auction."

"But the fellow has actually charged me commission on the purchase money which I have never received."

"Yes. You see his commission is payable upon the agreement."

“ Ah, yes ; the agreement, which was the origin of all the mischief. But hang it ; you see the people have pulled the house to pieces in removing the furniture and tearing the mirrors from off the walls.”

“ Oh, yes ; no one would take it in the condition it is in now,” said Mr. Maull, professionally. “ It will cost you £150 to put it into repair again.”

Poor Humphrey knew not where to turn ; he went his way gloomily back to his lodgings, where he found a welcome face in that of his friend Adeane.

Adeane gave Humphrey very little more comfort than Mr. Maull. He was more sympathetic, but not a bit more hopeful. It was clear that Humphrey must either accept the scandalous cheque, and make the best of a bad bargain, or return the cheque, and sue the house-agents for a larger sum.

“ This would involve staying in England

for at least a year," said Adeane, "at the rate at which the Superior Courts get through their business; and then these beggars have gone to work so cleverly that with the glorious uncertainty of the law, after all you might get very little more out of them than they offer you. Certainly, by the time you had paid your costs, you would have gained nothing, and you would have had to put off going to India for at least a year. All of which things these fellows know and reckon upon. Now that I think of it, I am almost surprised that they have offered so much."

"Come, come," said Humphrey, "£461 instead of £2,100 is pretty well."

"Yes; but suppose they had offered you £150 instead of £461; it still would have been a great question whether it would have been worth your while to stay in England, and bring an action against them. You might have alleged fraud, no doubt; but

even if you could have proved it, which would be unlikely, and got substantial damages, which would be still more unlikely, and avoided an appeal or a new trial on some point of law, in all of which you would have been exceedingly lucky, the fellows would probably have become bankrupt; and you would have got elevenpence-halfpenny in the pound, and had to pay your own attorney's costs in full."

"Good gracious!" said Humphrey, perfectly overwhelmed; "I begin to feel as if I had made quite a good thing out of it in having got this cheque: I think I will go and cash it without delay."

"You do not seem to have a very exalted opinion of English law," said Sybil.

"Oh, it is a capital thing for the lawyers," returned Adeane—"that is, for some lawyers; it has not done me very much good!"

"I suppose not; still I almost wonder at your leaving England: my husband used

to tell me you had so much literary work to do."

"Yes, I had; but you see literature is not my profession, and I do not care to make it my profession. It is pleasant enough to have some writing to do; but I have not got it in me to be a great writer, and I do not care to be a small one."

"Oh, but——"

"No, no! I am really fond of law, strange as it may seem to you; and I mean to have a try somewhere where I shall at least have a fair chance."

"But perhaps if you waited a little longer in England—one always hears how long it takes to get into good practice in England."

"So it does; but after ten years I do not think I am one day nearer getting into practice than I was the day I was called; and practice does not come with seniority, as a matter of course—like grey hair,"

said he, laughing. "No one need blame himself for not getting into practice in England."

"Certainly not," said Sybil.

"But a man ought to blame himself, I think, for settling down as a briefless barrister, even if he can spend his time and make his chamber-rent by writing a few magazine articles."

"Well, I am sure all I have been saying is most disinterested," said Sybil; "it will be such a pleasure to my husband to have you as a travelling companion—and going out to the same place too. We shall not feel half so strange in Garmagard, now that you will be there too."

"It is quite a case of *Kismet*—You see I have begun to study Hindustáni already!"

"Really, what a wonderful fellow you are!" said Humphrey admiringly.

"You must teach me a few words some day, please," said Sybil.

"Certainly, when I know enough myself," said Adeane; "we will all work together on board ship, if you like."

"Yes, if we are well enough," said Sybil with a slight shudder. Dover to Calais in the "Foam"—and Calais to Dover in the "Wave" were her entire experience of ocean highways.

"By the way, I must be off to my *munshi*," said Adeane; "he lives near here, and I thought I would call and see you on my way."

"And pray who or what is this 'she' or 'moon she' to whom we are thus, it seems, indebted for the pleasure of your visit?" said Sybil.

"Oh, I beg your pardon,—my native teacher; they are called *munshis*; a capital fellow—Syad Abdul Rahmán. By the way, have you taken your passage? I am going to take mine in a day or two. Hadn't we better go to Leadenhall Street together?"

“Certainly,” said Humphrey.

“Unless,” said Adeane gravely, “you intend to take to the law—in the capacity of plaintiff in an action; in which case I will ask the P. & O. people if they can let me know the sailings for this time two years.”

Humphrey shook his fist at him as he closed the door; and he was gone. He wished to cheer his friends; and indeed he was in such high spirits himself that he found no difficulty in the task. For that Hope, without which all our ventures are but weariness of the flesh, so filled his heart, that he was already forgetting those things which were behind, and pressing forward to those things which were before, like a good Christian and a good Englishman, and like a generous, hearty, healthy specimen of the genus man. He had obeyed Sallust’s precept, and had taken plenty of time to decide, but now that he had made up his mind what he ought to do, there was to be

no delay, no hesitation; it was Eastward Ho! and *vogue la galère!* He had put his hand to the plough, and he knew that he who looks back is fit neither for the kingdom of Heaven nor for the work of man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HUMPHREY lost no time in cashing the agent's cheque, and though he was sorely puzzled to know how to dispose of the house which was now upon his hands—abandoned by the imaginary Mr. Tuthill, he went a day or two afterwards with Francis Adeane to Leadenhall Street, and duly engaged berths in the good ship *Euphrates*, 3142 tons, Captain Warren, leaving Southampton on the 1st of October for Bombay.

On the same day he received the following letter from those active, enterprising house-agents, Messrs. Entwistle and Curlew.

“ OXMOUTH STREET, W., *Sept. 2nd*, 187-.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ An offer has this day been made to us by a gentleman who is well known to us, to purchase your interest in the lease of No. 17, Queen St., Mayfair, as it stands, for £350.

“ Considering the bad condition in which the premises now are, the season of the year, and your approaching departure for the East, we have thought proper to submit this offer to you, although the amount proposed is somewhat less than you originally instructed us to ask.

“ In the event of your not having disposed of the house before your departure, we shall be most happy to look after your interests in your absence, and dispose of your property to the best advantage after the dead season.

“ We are, dear sir, yours very faithfully,

“ ENTWISTLE & CURLEW.

“ H. PERCEVAL, Esq.”

This was really too much for Humphrey, and after blowing off a little steam in the form of very strong language, like an engine before starting, he sat down and wrote or rather fired off the following letter, which he promptly addressed, stamped, and deposited in the nearest pillar box, with the feelings of a man charging an infernal machine with dynamite. It was not a very powerful charge after all; but that was not for want of any goodwill on Humphrey's part.

It ran as follows :—

“SIR,

“If you are of opinion that the fact of the person who has made the preposterous offer contained in your letter just received, being ‘well known’ to you, is any recommendation, you are very much mistaken.

“On the contrary, from my experience of you I should have thought that he was

probably a scoundrel, and your present letter *convince*s me that he is, like yourself, a swindler.

“ H. PERCEVAL.”

This was taking out the balance in abuse with a vengeance: a Parthian shaft, after whose discharge Humphrey felt that the sooner he was off to India the better.

But something clearly must be done with the house. Another quarter's rent would be due on it in three weeks; it was not only unsold, but it was actually an expense. So, feeling desperate, he went to Mr. Maull, and instructed him to sell it by auction without reserve *at once*. The house-agent said “it would be throwing it away,” but he took his instructions, and that day week the house was brought to the hammer at Tokenhouse Yard. It fetched exactly £300. The commission and expenses amounted to about £40, leaving net £260. It would about pay the

expenses of their journey to Garmagard. The £461 odd, after paying off all old bills, and getting outfits, had been just about enough to pay for their lodging until October 1st, and leave a few pounds in hand for contingencies. The difference between £721 and £2000 was what Humphrey had calculated upon to set them up at Garmagard. Now whatever happened he could not begin penniless in India. He must sell some of his investments. It would reduce his income, it was true, but needs must when a certain person drives, and indeed that person seemed to have the reins in his hands now !

There is a French proverb anent "pulling him by the tail," and in good sooth Humphrey was gripping it very hard just at present.

The time passed mournfully and slowly until the day appointed for the sailing of the *Euphrates*. Acting under good advice the Percevals had got a very small special

“Indian outfit.” When they knew what they were going to do, and where they were going to live, they could get what they wanted just as well in India as in England.

London in September is proverbially dreary. Every place is dreary on the eve of a long voyage, when you have nothing to do. Every position is dreary on the eve of a great change, of a future of which nothing is known—of a leap in the dark. Every man is dreary who has just been cheated without the power of redress, and who finds his money melting away just when he has most need of it. And Humphrey had so long been beating the air.

How different was the position, how different were the prospects of Humphrey Perceval and of Francis Adeane. The latter had his profession. He might succeed, and he might fail, but his way was clearly marked.

Humphrey had written to Lord Blisworth

to tell him of his approaching departure, and had received a very kind letter of farewell and Godspeed.

Adeane spent the greater part of his spare time with Arthur Phipps, who was coming out with them as far as Egypt, partly to see Adeane so far on his journey, and partly as it afforded him an excuse for visiting Alexandria and Cairo, and spending a winter up the Nile.

And now the time drew nearer and nearer, and the last day of September arrived. Humphrey was somewhat nervously talking over past, present, and future affairs with Sybil.

"Well, everything is settled, and wound up, I think," said he.

"Yes; I do not think we owe a shilling in the world. And besides the bill for £500 on Bombay, we have £175 in hand—in sovereigns."

"Well, I am sure we have managed very

well. And we have sold everything that we are not taking with us."

"Yes, indeed," said Sybil, sadly.

"No, by Jove," said Humphrey, suddenly; "there are those three pictures at Moroni and Peele's."

"What; those that Lord Blisworth persuaded you to send to them instead of leaving them to be sold in the house with the other things?"

"Yes; my poor father valued them very highly; he got them in Italy. One was said to be a Guercino; the other two, I think, Venetian."

"Did you put any price on them?"

"No. Lord Blisworth told me I had better leave that to the dealers. He said I could depend upon them completely."

"I wonder what they are worth."

"Upon my word, I don't know. The pictures that were sold in the house fetched about five or six pounds a piece."

“Yes ; but these are better pictures, more valuable, I am sure. I used to be so fond of that Guercino, and the way the soft golden light fell on the face. Please don’t hurry the sale of them, as Lord Blisworth told you you could trust the people.”

“Oh, well, I don’t know——”

A knock at the door, which immediately burst open, after the manner of lodging-house doors, and gave entrance to a hasty maid.

“Please, Sir, here’s a letter, and the young man who brought it is waiting for an answer.”

Enclosure.

“77, PALL MALL EAST, S.W.,

“September 30th, 187-.

“DEAR SIR,

“We have the pleasure to inform you that we have disposed of the three pictures left with us by you for sale. You were good enough to leave the price to us, and we succeeded in obtaining so favourable

an offer that we closed with it at once. We trust that you will approve of the course we have taken, and can hardly imagine that you can be otherwise than highly satisfied with the result.

“We enclose account and cheque.

“Your very faithful servants,

“MORONI & PEELE.

“HUMPHREY PERCEVAL, Esq.”

The cheque was for £450.

CHAPTER XIX.

“RATHER a dull volume, did you say, Madam?”

“I fear so.”

“But all lives are not as bright as yours. And if you can take no pleasure in the misfortunes of your fellow creatures, you are much to be pitied. You have not read Lucretius—though indeed there is no saying what ladies have not read now-a-days; but my Lord there knows at least as much as —

‘*Suave, mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,
Et terrâ magnum alterius spectare laborem :*’

and perhaps he will translate it to you.”

“No; *I* won’t; it’s not my place. I am an author, however poor a one, and not a translator; and I maintain, first of all, that I am not bound to know Latin because I am a Master of Arts; and secondly, that I am not bound to translate it for you because I have written a book.”

“Well, granted, Sir. But admit that your book is too full of business—and especially of figures. One might as well read a merchant’s ledger, and I, who never can even get my weekly house-books to come right——”

“Pardon me, my dear Madam, but you almost justify me by your objections. In the lives of men and women at the present day, even in that of your ladyship, there is a good deal of business, a great many figures; and as I have the modest pretension of describing people and things as much as possible as they are—with only just a suspicion now and then of ‘as they might be’——”

“Ah! there it is, I cannot endure a

commonplace story. A little mystery is absolutely necessary."

"Have you ever read the 'Castle of Otranto?'"

"By Miss Braddon?"

"No, by Horace Walpole."

"Oh, he lived a hundred years ago, did he not? No, I have never read any of those old novels—except 'Evelina;' and how tired I got of those eternal letters?"

"It is just as well then, that you never embarked upon 'Clarissa Harlowe.'"

"Perhaps so; but that reminds me that you have filled your own book much too full of letters. I am sure one has plenty to answer in real life without——"

"But then, Madam, you need not answer mine."

"True; but your letters are disagreeably real, all the same."

"I am very sorry, Madam; but pray read the 'Castle of Otranto;' you will find no

letters, and plenty of mystery—packed, potted mystery in fact; why there is a helmet in the very first chapter big enough to contain all the heads of all the characters that Miss Braddon ever drew. But you must remember that the story is a burlesque. Horace Walpole was far too cynical a wit to write such a story *au grand serieux*.”

“Well, I will read the book if you like. But now tell me what are you going to do with Humphrey and Sybil? You must really get them out of all their troubles. As for that Mr. Adeane, I haven’t the least interest in him; I see he is going to be Lord Chancellor of India, or something of that sort.”

“Poor Adeane! well, no matter. As to the Percevals, I will take care that they come to a good end.”

“But what can you do? they are married already—silly children; and in the first volume

too! You have made them as poor as Job in the second; and you have nothing to do but to make them as rich as Croesus in the third—unless, indeed, you kill Sir Walter? Come?”

“No, Madam, the rack shall not extract my secret from me.”

“What, have you a secret?”

“Suppose I said a mystery?”

“Really!”

“But will you come out to India with me in search of it?”

“Another moonstone? A yellow diamond glittering in the eye of an idol, Brahmins, and all that sort of thing?”

“Scarcely, Madam.”

“No? Well, then, I don’t know. Perhaps it will be commonplace Indian life after all. People in muslin shaking pagoda trees and smoking hookers, and so on.”

“No, I promise you you shall have no pagoda trees, not even the conventional

palm tree ; and the gentlemen shall neither wear muslin nor smoke *hookahs*."

"Well, I suppose I must. It's a long way though ; and I think I would rather remain in Belgravia, or take a trip to the Hebrides."

"With Dr. Johnson?"

"You mean with Mr. Black, I presume?"

"Of course ! I beg your pardon.—But we must come on board at once, if you please ; the second bell is ringing.—Gently ! take care of the gangway, there we are—Now, "Any more for the shore ?"—There goes the last bell. Ding-dong, Ding-dong, Ding-dong, Ding-dong,—and we are off, may it please your ladyship—to INDIA."

END OF VOL. II.

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